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ABSTRACT

This report is one of a series on how curriculum unit experiences in U.S. history influenced the learning of fifth-grade students. This report focuses on the American Revolution period. Before the unit began, three classes of fifth graders stated what they knew (or thought they knew) about the events leading up to the Revolutionary War, the War itself, and what occurred in the new nation as it began the process of governing itself. In general, students knew very little about this period as they approached their study of it. After the unit, most of the students were much better informed and seemed to have a reasonably good understanding of the events and the historical context in question. They also demonstrated some understanding of circumstances that may have contributed to the Revolutionary War. However, most students appeared to lack an appreciation of different interpretive positions on the issues that surrounded the birth of the United States. They also were limited in their understanding of how the new nation began the process of self-government. (Author)

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Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 81

FIFTH-GRADERS' IDEAS ABOUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION EXPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER STUDYING IT WITHIN A U.S. HISTORY COURSE

Bruce A. VanSledright, Jere Brophy,
and Nancy Bredin

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching

College of Education

Michigan State University

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Abstract

This report is one of a series on how curriculum unit experiences in U.S. history influenced the learning of fifth-grade students. This report focuses on the American Revolution period. Before the unit began, three classes of fifth graders stated what they knew (or thought they knew) about the events leading up to Revolutionary War, the war itself, and what occurred in the new nation as it began the process of governing itself. In general, students knew very little about this period as they approached their study of it. After the unit, most of the students were much better informed and seemed to have a reasonably good understanding of the events and the historical context in question. They also demonstrated some understanding of circumstances that may have contributed to the Revolutionary War. However, most students appeared to lack an appreciation of different interpretive positions on the issues that surrounded the birth of the United States. They also were limited in their understanding of how the new nation began the process of self-government.

FIFTH-GRADERS' IDEAS ABOUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION EXPRESSED BEFORE AND AFTER STUDYING IT WITHIN A U.S. HISTORY COURSE

Bruce A. VanSledright, Jere Brophy, and Nancy Bredin[1]

Current theory and research on subject-matter teaching emphasize the importance of teaching school subjects for understanding, appreciation, and application, not just knowledge memorization and skills practice. Drawing on neo-Vygotskian theorizing and work on knowledge construction, conceptual change, and situated learning, educators have been developing methods of teaching school subjects in ways that connect with students' existing knowledge and experience and engage them in actively constructing new knowledge and changing their naive conceptions. Progress is most evident in mathematics and science, where rich literatures have developed describing what children typically know (or think they know) about the content taught at their respective grade levels. Curriculum developers can then use this information as a basis for developing instruction that both builds on students' existing valid knowledge and confronts and changes their misconceptions.

The potential for applying similar concepts and methods to curriculum development appears to be at least as great in social studies as in other school subjects, but realization of this potential cannot occur until a significant understanding is attained describing children's knowledge and naive ideas about the social studies content commonly taught at each grade level. The authors have initiated a program of research designed to address this issue by

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interviewing elementary students before and after each of their social studies units. Establishment of such knowledge is only just beginning, especially with respect to children's developing knowledge of U.S. history. So far, child development researchers have concentrated on cognitive structures and strategies that children acquire through general life experiences rather than on their developing understanding of knowledge domains learned primarily at school. Much of this research has focused on mathematical and scientific knowledge, although there have been some studies of stages in the development of economic, political, and social knowledge (Berti & Bombi, 1988; Furnham & Stacey, 1991; Furth, 1980; Moore, Lare, & Wagner, 1985). The literature on cognitive and social development is useful for establishing a context within which to study children's knowledge and misconceptions about topics featured in social studies curricula, but it provides little direct information about particular developments in this knowledge domain.

Nor have scholars concerned with curriculum and instruction in social studies developed much such information. There have been occasional surveys of children's knowledge about particular social studies topics (Guzzetta, 1969; Ravitch & Finn, 1987). These have concentrated mostly on isolated facts such as names, places, or definitions, with analysis and reporting of findings being limited to the percentages of students in various categories who were able to answer each item correctly. To be more useful to educators, research on children's social studies knowledge needs to shift to more sustained interviewing approaches in which questions are designed to probe children's understanding of connected networks of knowledge. Similarly, the children's responses need to be analyzed with attention to qualitative aspects of their thinking about the topic, including identification of commonly held misconceptions.

Not much work of this kind has been done in history. There have been a few studies of degrees of sophistication in adolescents' historical understandings, mostly in Great Britain (Dickinson & Lee, 1984; Shemilt, 1984). However, there has not been much research on children's knowledge of and thinking about U.S. history. Levstik and Pappas (1987) explored the development of children's historical understandings by asking them to recall a historical narrative and then to define history and distinguish it from "the past." McKeown and Beck (1990) studied fifth-graders' knowledge and thinking about the American Revolution before and after a curriculum unit on the topic and Barton (1992) developed a case study of teaching and learning during a comparable unit. We will refer to their work in presenting and discussing our findings.

The authors have initiated a program of research designed to build on these beginnings by interviewing elementary students before and after each of their social studies units. The preunit interviews develop information about the knowledge and possible naive conceptions about unit topics that students possess even before instruction in the unit begins. Thus, the preunit data provide information about what students know (or think they know) about a topic via information acquired in earlier grades or through reading or out-of-school experiences. The postunit data show how the students' knowledge and thinking about the topic have changed in response to the instruction and learning activities they experienced during the unit. These data identify the aspects of unit instruction that were most salient to the students, the degree to which knowledge gaps were filled in and conceptions were changed, and the degree to which naive conceptions have persisted despite exposure to evidence-based ideas during the unit.

Procedures

As the first step in a program of research that eventually will encompass the full K-5 range, we have begun interviewing at the fifth-grade level. Fifth graders are generally more knowledgeable and easier to interview than younger students. However, they usually have not been exposed to history as a discipline or to sustained, chronologically organized instruction in history prior to their fifth-grade U.S. history course. They possess bits and pieces of knowledge about the past (Native Americans, the Pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving, Columbus, presidents and other famous Americans, and smatterings of state history), but they usually have not yet studied systematic chronological history. Thus, although they are relatively sophisticated learners, fifth graders usually enter their U.S. history course with very little systematic prior knowledge.

The students that we have been interviewing are typical in this respect. Their school district's curriculum guidelines and adopted elementary social studies series both follow the expanding communities framework that focuses on the self in kindergarten, the family in first grade, the neighborhood in second grade, the community in third grade, the state and region in fourth grade, and the United States in fifth grade. The teachers do not always rely heavily on the adopted textbooks and accompanying worksheets and activities suggestions, but they do follow the district guidelines and teach the topics traditionally emphasized within the expanding communities framework that has been called the de facto national curriculum in elementary social studies (Naylor & Diem, 1987).

The interviewees are a stratified sample of fifth graders who attend an elementary school located in a working-class/lower middle-class suburb of Lansing, Michigan. All of the students are white, as are the vast majority of

their classmates. The sample includes five boys and five girls. Within each gender group there are two high achievers, two average achievers, and one low achiever, based on academic achievement in fourth grade. Because we could interview no more than 10 students due to resource limitations, we weighted the sample toward higher achievers in the expectation that this would yield more substantive responses. Students were interviewed individually in quiet rooms outside of their classrooms. Interviews required 15-30 minutes. They were tape-recorded and later transcribed for analysis, using pseudonyms to preserve the students' anonymity.

This report focuses on a unit on the American Revolution period taught during the Spring of 1991. It was the fifth unit of the U.S. history course, following an introductory unit on history and the work of historians, a second unit on Native Americans, a third unit on European exploration of North America, and a fourth unit on the English colonies. Findings from interviews conducted before and after the first unit are presented in Brophy, VanSledright, and Bredin (1991, 1992c); findings from the Native American unit are presented in VanSledright, Brophy, and Bredin (1992); findings from the explorers unit are presented in Brophy, VanSledright, and Bredin (1992a), and findings from the colonies unit are presented in Brophy, VanSledright, and Bredin (1992b).

In developing questions for the interviews, we focused on two overlapping sets of ideas: (1) the unit topics and associated key ideas traditionally taught in fifth-grade U.S. history courses and (2) the major goals and key ideas emphasized by this particular fifth-grade teacher. Thus, although our primary interest was in seeing how representative students would respond to questions about commonly taught curriculum topics, we adapted the questions to the particular curriculum that these students would experience. The teacher's intended goals and content emphases were taken into account in selecting

questions to be included in the interview, and her knowledge of what transpired as the unit progressed was included in interpreting the findings.

The teacher's approach to teaching U.S. history is noteworthy for her use of children's literature and her own storytelling and explanations, rather than a textbook, as a major source of input to students; her emphasis on depth of development of key ideas rather than breadth of coverage in selecting and representing content; her use of several devices designed to help students focus on key ideas and structure their learning around them (e.g., introducing and closing units with KWL exercises (see page 10); displaying key terms, organized within "people," "places," and "events" categories, on a history bulletin board; and creating, reviewing, and then posting story maps that summarize and connect the key details of important historical episodes); and her emphasis on cooperative learning activities and extended writing assignments over worksheets and short-answer tests. Her major social studies content goal for the year is to teach students about the establishment and development of the United States as a nation. In addition to providing information through stories and explanations, this includes keeping track of developments by locating them on time lines and maps.

The teacher's first unit introduced students to history and the work of historians. Key concepts included primary and secondary sources; artifacts (examples from each period); the work of historians and why their job is important; time lines and chronological order; the students' personal histories (helping them to realize that they do have personal histories that begin on their birthdays and that these can be documented using artifacts, photos, and information from primary and secondary sources); and United States history (helping students to realize that, just as they have histories as individuals, the United States has a history as a nation that they would be learning about

during the year). To apply these concepts, the students developed information about their own personal histories by interviewing their parents and other relatives, collecting artifacts (birth certificates, photos, baby books, newspapers from their birth dates, etc.) and then organizing this information by creating a time line that identified noteworthy events in their lives and illustrated them with the artifacts. This experience in acting as historians by investigating their own lives and summarizing key information along a time line was intended to help them understand the reconstructive and interpretive nature of history as a discipline, the process of tracing developments through time, and the uses of information sources and time lines.

Subsequent units established a context for this unit on the Revolution. The units on Native Americans and on explorers took North America as a whole as their purview. In the Native Americans unit, the students studied five major tribal groups who developed different cultures and customs in the process of adapting to life in different parts of the continent. In the explorers unit, the students learned that the voyages of discovery sponsored by western European nations beginning in 1492 were initially focused on finding shorter ocean routes to the Far East, but that as they began to realize that they had encountered a whole "New World," they began to claim land and seek to exploit it through trade, conquest, and colonization. This learning included study of maps indicating which portions of the North American continent were claimed and later controlled by England, France, and Spain, respectively.

The next two units focused on the English colonies that later became the original 13 states. During the colonies unit, the students learned about the difficulties experienced in establishing the first settlements in the New World and about life and times in the colonies in the 17th century. In the American Revolution unit, the students learned about how growing conflict over taxes and

other issues eventually led the colonies to unite and declare independence from England, then secure that independence through the Revolutionary War.

The unit began with a time-line exercise. This exercise was designed to assist students in understanding that England still ruled the colonies but that the colonies were about to embark on a move to become an independent nation. The unit then considered the debt problems King George faced as a consequence of the French and Indian War. The teacher explained that King George attempted to service this debt by imposing taxes on the colonists. The colonists resisted these taxes, setting the stage for armed conflict. In connection with these events, students read the book Can't You Make Them Behave, King George? (written by Jean Fritz and published in 1977 by Coward, McCann & Geohegan, New York).

The unit then covered selected events leading up to the actual conflict: the Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, the Intolerable Acts, and the activities of the Sons of Liberty and the Minutemen. Students learned about the phrase "no taxation without representation" by writing songs and making posters. They then discussed the differences between the military drill and garb of the Patriot militias and the English Redcoats. They also were asked to choose one of the 13 colonial flags, research the colony the flag represented, and prepare a written report on that colony. The teacher stressed how flags and slogans were used to rally the colonists to the cause of independence. At this point, the teacher read My Brother Sam Is Dead (written by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier and published in 1974 by Four Winds Press, New York) to illustrate how the conflict divided the colonists into groups that were loyal to the king, bent on forming their own country, or uncommitted to either of these factions.

Using additional trade books, historical fiction accounts, and her own storytelling, the teacher profiled a number of revolutionary leaders, including

John and Abigail Adams, Sam Adams, Paul Revere, Ben Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Nathan Hale, Crispus Attucks, and Francis Marion (the "Swamp Fox"). The coverage of Paul Revere also included the story about how Dawes and Prescott, other riders who warned colonists about Redcoat encroachments, also got through with their warnings despite the fact that Paul Revere usually receives all the credit. Following this, the teacher spent time covering the war itself. She focused on the key battles at Trenton, Valley Forge, Yorktown, and Charleston but pointed out how the war left no part of the 13 colonies unaffected. She placed particular emphasis on the harsh winter at Valley Forge and the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

The teacher made a point to include women important to the revolutionary effort by using the book Patriots in Petticoats (written by Patricia Edwards Clyne and published in 1976 by Dodd, Mead & Company, New York). This book described the activities of women such as Deborah Sampson, Lydia Darragh, and Sybil Ludington. Each student was asked to research one of these women who played a significant role in the Revolution and make a product (e.g., poster, game, video, etc.) to "sell" her accomplishments to classmates.

Two other key activities included a composition assignment in which students were asked to write a historical fiction account as if they were actual participants in the Revolutionary War and a point of view assignment which called for students to distinguish the perspectives of King George, the British soldiers, and the American patriots. The teacher mentioned the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* and the writing of the *Constitution* but did not get into either of these documents and their origins in any detail, leaving that for later grades.

KWL Findings

We begin our presentation of findings with the KWL data collected by the teacher at the beginning and end of the unit. KWL is a technique, based on schema-theoretic views of the reading comprehension process, for advancing learning by helping learners to retrieve relevant background knowledge and learn with metacognitive awareness of purpose and accomplishment (Ogle, 1986). Students fill out the KWL forms in two steps. As they begin to study a topic, they are asked to write down everything they Know about the topic and what they Want to learn about it. Following the unit, they write down what they Learned about the topic. The KWL technique generates useful diagnostic and assessment information concerning students' interests and knowledge of the topic prior to learning more about it. After experience with the topic, it provides information about what the students learned and found salient.

Prior to this unit, the KWL sheets instructed students to write down what they knew about the American Revolution and what they wanted to learn about it. KWL data were available for 71 students, 40 boys and 31 girls, because subject-matter specializations by the fifth-grade teachers allowed this teacher to teach U.S. history to three class sections.

What the Students Knew About the American Revolution

Table 1 portrays key features of the students' responses to the first section of the KWL form. Here students described what they Knew (or thought they knew) about the American Revolution period. The categories in the table (and in subsequent tables) were developed post facto based on obtained student responses. No attempt was made to code the data using categories developed in advance.

Table 1

What the Students Said They Knew About the American Revolution

	Boys (N = 40)	Girls (N = 31)	Total (N = 71)
1. I don't know anything	19	18	37
A. General Ideas			
1. Many died	4	5	9
2. Happened long ago	2	2	4
3. Big war	2	4	6
4. Important to history	0	1	1
5. Many people were in it	0	1	1
6. I know lots	1	0	1
B. Specific Details and Ideas			
1. Happened in the 1800s	1	0	1
2. Happened in the 1700s	0	1	1
3. Fought against British	2	0	2
4. Fought for freedom/independence	3	1	4
5. Began in 1775 and ended in 1783	2	0	2
6. Fought between England and 13 colonies	1	0	1
7. Bostonians threw tea in the bay	1	0	1
8. Paul Revere's ride	1	0	1
9. Bluecoats fought the Redcoats	1	0	1
10. Eight-year war	1	0	1
11. Cannons were used	1	0	1
12. King George was part of it	1	0	1
13. Bluecoats won	1	2	3
14. Fort Washington	1	0	1
15. Fought for Georgia and Alabama	1	0	1
16. Women served/helped the men	1	2	3
17. War took place in the southern and northern states; fought for black freedom and slavery; Lincoln was president; north won; south wanted slavery	1	1	2
18. *Constitution* was written	0	1	1
19. Took place in the north central states	0	1	1
20. Fought in the New England states	0	1	1
21. Fought between France and us	0	1	1
22. Lasted four years/long time	0	2	2
23. Guns, tanks, cannons, missiles were used in a ground war	0	2	2
24. Fought over whether the king should rule in the New World	0	1	1
25. Fought by the Great Lakes	0	1	1
26. Molly Pitcher	0	1	1

Slightly over half the students reported that they knew nothing about the Revolutionary War period in American history. With regard to general ideas about the historical period, nine students indicated (probably intuitively) that many died, six mentioned that it was a big war, four noted that it had happened a long time ago, and one student each reported that it was important and many people were involved. One boy stated that "I know lots."

In terms of more specific details, there appeared a total of 38 responses. Four students knew that the war was fought over independence or freedom. Three mentioned that the "Bluecoats won" (referring to the dress of some colonial soldiers perhaps, although it is possible that some were confused with the Northern soldiers' victory in the Civil War--a confusion which had appeared in earlier interviews with these same students and also in other responses shown in Table 1). Three noted that women had served in the war and helped the men. Only a few students were specific enough to include details such as references to Paul Revere, the Boston Tea Party, King George, Molly Pitcher, the *Constitution*, or the fact that the war was fought against the British. Of interest for what it reveals about some students' confusion about the period, two students described details about the Civil War, one said that the war was fought between France and "us," and another mentioned that it was fought near the Great Lakes. The latter two responses indicate that, even into the spring of Grade 5, at least a few students remembered some of what they had learned about the French and Indian War in fourth-grade state history but identified it as the Revolutionary War.

McKeown and Beck (1990) also interviewed fifth graders about to begin study of the Revolutionary period. They reported similar trends in students' responses to the question "Back in our history there was something called the Revolutionary War--tell me anything you know about the Revolutionary War."

Only a few of those fifth graders had specific knowledge that the war was fought for independence from England, although many of them guessed that gaining freedom had something to do with it. About half confused elements of the Revolutionary War with elements of the French and Indian War, the Civil War, or other wars.

What the Students Wanted to Learn

Table 2 outlines verbatim student responses to the W section of the KWL form (What do I want know about the American Revolution period?). Twenty-seven students noted that they wished to learn "everything," "all I can," or "a lot." The remaining students asked questions that we have grouped into what, who, why, where, and when categories. These fifth-graders were most interested i.. the people of the period (39 questions). This interest was followed by why questions, particularly why the war started and why it seemed necessary (25 questions). The students were interested also in the details, events, and terms of the war period (22 questions).

For fifth graders who were mostly unfamiliar with this period, the students seemed quite curious and asked a fairly impressive array of questions. This might be related to a general interest in the nature of conflict that the term "war" invokes. This in turn may be connected to the dramatic, story-like features (especially evident in the "good guy-bad guy" nature of war accounts) embedded in historical narratives. We have found these to be of much interest to this age group (VanSledright & Brophy, 1991, 1992). Because all the questions students asked appear in Table 2, we move to the final section of the KWL.

Table 2

What the Students Wanted to Know about the American Revolution

	Boys (N = 40)	Girls (N = 31)	Total (N = 71)
Everything (or all I can or a lot)	14	13	27
1. "What" questions (events, terms, concepts)			
What happened?	5	2	7
What was the Revolutionary War?	2	0	2
What does "revolutionary" stand for?	1	0	1
What weapons were used?	3	0	3
Cost of weapons?	1	0	1
Different battles?	2	0	2
How many people died?	2	3	5
How did people survive the war?	0	1	1
2. "Who" questions (people)			
Who started the war?	4	2	6
Who won the war?	4	3	7
Whose side were we on?	1	0	1
Who fought in it?	2	8	10
What did they want from the war?	1	0	1
Were Indians involved?	1	0	1
Did women die in the war?	1	0	1
Who was president?	1	0	1
What famous people were in the war?	2	3	5
What famous people died in the war?	1	0	1
Who was the war with?	0	4	4
Who were the women in it?	0	1	1
3. "Why" questions (reasons)			
Why did the war start?	11	4	15
Why were they fighting?	3	0	3
Why did we have the war?	0	6	6
Why was the war important?	0	1	1
4. "Where" questions (location)			
Where did it take place?	6	3	9
5. "When" questions (chronology)			
When did the war take place?	3	3	6
When did the war end?	2	0	2
How long did the war last?	1	2	3
What year did it start?	1	0	1

Table 3

What the Students Said They Learned About the American Revolution

	Boys (N = 40)	Girls (N = 30)	Total (N = 70)
A. Recall of Key Words, Names, Events, Terms, Dates			
1. Dates			
Started in 1775, happened in 1700s	2	1	3
Signing of Declaration of Independence, 1776	0	1	1
War ended in 1883	0	1	1
2. Events			
Paul Revere's ride (with helpers)	10	9	19
Sybil Ludington rode to warn colonists	2	1	3
Boston Tea Party described	5	12	17
King George taxed the colonists	4	3	7
King George started the war	4	3	7
King George sent troops	1	1	2
King George ruled the British/Redcoats	0	2	2
First battle at Lexington	8	4	12
Last battle (surrender) at Yorktown	6	7	13
Colonists/Patriots/We won the war	10	6	16
British won some battles	2	1	3
Colonists won three battles; British won three	0	4	4
The first war was the French and Indian War	1	2	3
Paul Revere, silversmith, did engraving of the Boston Massacre	0	2	2
Paul Revere got caught by the Redcoats	0	2	2
Women became famous; fought in the war	1	1	2
"Shot heard 'round the world" was at Lexington	1	1	2
3. People			
Paul Revere	16	18	34
Francis Marion/Swamp Fox	20	12	32
King George	13	19	32
Sybil Ludington	9	3	12
Molly Pitcher	5	3	8
Sam Adams	6	1	7
Cornwallis	2	4	6
Washington	4	2	6
Crispus Attucks	2	3	5
Johnny Tremaine	1	3	4
John Adams	2	0	2
William Dawes	2	1	3
William Davies	0	1	1
John Hancock	1	1	2
Deborah Sampson	0	1	1
Dr. Prescott	0	1	1
Tom Adams	1	0	1

Table 3 (cont'd.)

4. Key Words or Terms			
Boston Massacre	14	8	22
Boston Tea Party	12	10	22
Sons of Liberty	10	14	24
Redcoats	9	7	16
French and Indian War	4	7	11
Stamp Act	5	5	10
Intolerable Acts	5	2	7
Yorktown	6	4	10
Lexington	8	3	11
Concord	6	4	10
Lobsterbacks	4	3	7
Quartering Act	5	1	6
"Shot heard 'round the world"	2	2	4
"No taxation without representation"	2	1	3
Continental Congress	1	3	4
Declaration of Independence	1	2	3
Tories	2	0	2
Patriots	2	2	4
Liberty Tree	0	2	2
Quartering Act defined/described	3	1	4
B. Cause-Effect Relationships			
1. Children and Crispus Attucks were shot by Redcoats for throwing snowballs; Boston Massacre	6	8	14
2. The Swamp Fox made trouble for the British, causing them to retreat	6	4	10
3. The Stamp Act, Boston Massacre, Quartering Act, and the Intolerable Acts led to the Revolutionary War	8	2	10
4. The French and Indian War and King George's failure to pay for it caused the Revolutionary War	4	14	18
5. Colonists (Sons of Liberty) dumped tea into Boston Harbor because of tax on tea	3	4	7
C. General Ideas and Opinions			
1. Learned more than I knew; a lot	3	1	4
2. Learned about the war, battles, who won	7	3	10
3. "We are now free," freedom	0	3	3
4. Redcoats were enemies; treated the colonists badly	0	2	2
5. Good learning experience for kids	2	0	2
6. King George was stupid, did bad things	0	2	2

Table 3 (cont'd.)

7. King George was selfish and mean	0	1	1
8. British caused trouble for Americans	1	0	1
9. Bad crisis at Boston Massacre (the name says it all!)	1	0	1
10. Life was hard during these times	1	0	1
11. King George was unfair not to pay for the French and Indian War but then bought the Redcoats uniforms	0	1	1

What the Students Reported Learning

Upon completion of the unit, the KWL sheets were returned to the students so that they could report what the had Learned. Their responses are summarized in Table 3. Due to an absent student, responses to the L section reduced the sample size from 71 to 70. We have clustered the responses into groups which included recall of key words, names, events, terms, and dates; cause-effect relationships; and general ideas and opinions.

As students wrote their responses to the L section, they were able, if they chose, to scan the room for key words and terms that the teacher had posted around the walls of the classroom during the unit. A time line spanned the front of the room. Names and often pictures of Revolutionary War heroes (e.g., George Washington, Francis Marion, Thomas Jefferson, Molly Pitcher, and others) were evident on bulletin boards. The presence of these "cues" no doubt influenced what some students reported on the L section.

As Table 3 indicates, students were able to report a wide array of events, terms, names, and key words. For Revolutionary War period events, 19 students mentioned Paul Revere's ride, 17 recalled and described the Boston Tea Party, 12 noted the first battle at Lexington, 13 also noted the last battle and surrender at Yorktown, and 16 mentioned that the colonists won the war. The 70 students noted a total of 116 responses, clustered by 17 different events, averaging 1.7 responses per student.

Frequently mentioned people of the period included Paul Revere (34 responses), Francis Marion (32), King George (32), Sybil Ludington (12), and Molly Pitcher (8). Many other names were mentioned but with less regularity. The fact that some names were mentioned more often than others in the L section could be related to two things: first, the teacher used historical fiction narratives to focus on the roles and accomplishments of certain individuals

(e.g., Paul Revere, Francis Marion, King George, Molly Pitcher), and second, the research reports that students compiled on two of the women (Ludington and Pitcher) may have played a significant role in the degree to which they remained memorable. Students mentioned 17 different Revolutionary War individuals in 157 responses, providing almost 2.3 "people" responses on average. One might conclude that their desire to learn about the people involved in the war period (see Table 2) was reasonably well satisfied.

Key words and terms were also reported frequently. Twenty-four students mentioned the Sons of Liberty, 22 noted the Boston Tea Party, and 22 recalled the Boston Massacre. The Redcoats were mentioned 16 times, the French and Indian War and Lexington 11 times each, and the Stamp Act, Yorktown, and Concord 10 times apiece. Students identified 20 different terms (often described in connection with events or cause-effect relationships) within a total of 182 responses. This averages to 2.6 recalled terms or key words per student.

Notably, a number of students were able to draw cause-effect inferences on the L section. Fourteen students linked the harassment of the Redcoats by colonists as a primary cause for the Boston Massacre. After reading a memorable account of the war activities of Francis Marion (the Swamp Fox) in a trade book, 10 students related his efforts to the retreat of British troops in fighting that took place in the southern colonies. Ten students also noted that the Stamp Act, the Quartering Act, and the Intolerable Acts led to the Revolutionary War. Eighteen students wrote about how the French and Indian War debt created circumstances which eventually turned many colonists against their mother country. Finally, seven students described the work of the Sons of Liberty and their participation in the Boston Tea Party as tied to the British tax on tea.

Several students added interesting general and/or evaluatory remarks at the conclusion of what they wrote for the L section. Here are a few examples with the frequency with which they appeared indicated in parentheses.

I learned more than I knew; I learned a lot. (4)

Redcoats were enemies; they treated the colonists badly. (2)

Good learning experience for kids. (2)

King George was stupid; he did bad things. (2)

King George was selfish and mean. (1)

The British caused trouble for the Americans. (1)

King George was unfair not to pay for the French and Indian War but then bought the Redcoats uniforms. (1)

Although only four students responded with negative affect concerning the treatment of the colonists by the British, it might be fair to conclude that the teacher sought to and generally succeeded in creating favorable empathy for the colonists' position prior to and during the war. This would be consistent with the general goal of transmitting cultural knowledge about the rebellious position of key American historical figures in the Revolutionary War era as acceptable and justifiable under the circumstances. However, one might also argue that it would have been beneficial for students to have spent more time considering the context of the war period from both the British and colonial perspectives so as to focus attention on the historiographical concept of interpretive point of view.

Several potentially interesting gender differences appeared in the KWL data. In the W section, the boys who asked "why" questions about the war seemed interested in why the actual fighting began, whereas the girls appeared to ask (at least by implication) why the war had to be fought in the first place. In the L section, the girls were more likely to talk about the Boston

Tea Party, whereas the boys were more likely to talk about the colonial victory. The boys noted the Swamp Fox almost twice as many times as the girls while the girls seemed to find King George a more memorable character than the boys. Although certainly not a convincing pattern, it could be said that the boys were generally more interested in war details (key war figures, battles, and weaponry) than were the girls. Curiously, when accounting for the causes of the war, boys (by a 4 to 1 ratio) attributed it to specific British policies (Stamp Act, Quartering Act) whereas girls (by a 3.5 to 1 ratio) attributed it to King George's failure to pay for the French and Indian War.

Taken at face value, the data from the L section of the KWL suggest that students' knowledge and general understanding of the Revolutionary War period grew considerably. A number of students went from knowing virtually nothing to being fairly adept at recalling and describing key names, events, and in some cases cause-effect relationships. Naive ideas and confusions (e.g., equating the French and Indian War or Civil War with the Revolutionary War) seemed to disappear as a result of experience with the unit content. However, it should be kept in mind that the students had the "classroom cues" at their disposal as they filled out the L sections of the KWL sheets. We do not know how much these cues were used and by whom, given the way in which the KWLs were administered. To augment the KWL data, we interviewed a subsample of 10 students in depth.

Interview Findings

Responses to various pre- and postunit questions will be presented in clusters arranged to contrast students' entry-level knowledge and understandings with how their thinking and ideas changed after they experienced the unit. Summaries of student responses are provided in Table 4. Here the students are

Table 4. Interview Responses by Question

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre 1. How did the U.S. become an independent country? Why?													
Don't know	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Wanted more land	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	3
Tired of King's rule	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	3
Revolutionary War	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Post 1. How did the U.S. become an independent country? Why?													
Patriots fought English and won the Revolutionary War	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	4
Won their freedom from the king	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	3	6
Fought over taxes (no taxation without representation)	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	3	6
Signed Declaration of Independence/were free	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Pre 2. Colonists changed their minds about being under British control. Why?													
I don't know/can't remember	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	5
King was mean	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Over control of the land	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
King wanted too much (gold)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Colonists wanted their own lives; to be free	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3

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Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Post 2. Colonists changed their minds about being under British Control. Why?													
They wanted to be free	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Because of the taxes (over the French and Indian War)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	10
King was too powerful; unfair	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	3	4
Boston Massacre	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Closing of Boston Harbor	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Quartering Act	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Stamp Act	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
The king wanted all the land	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Post 3. What were the problems caused by the French and Indian War?													
English fought the French with the Indians on the French side	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	3	6
King George taxed the colonists to pay for the French and Indian War	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	5	3	8
The British won so this protected the colonists	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Colonists refused to pay the taxes	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
King George sent the Redcoats and there was trouble (e.g., Boston Massacre)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
The French and Indians won the war, which made King George angry	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
The French and Indian War led up to the Revolutionary War	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
British fought on the side of the French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Not sure what problems were caused	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1

Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	M	M	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre 3. What does "no taxation without representation" mean?													
I don't know, never heard it before	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	10
People fought against the rising price of tea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
The king wants tax for the land	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Post 4. What does "no taxation without representation" mean?													
I don't know; not sure	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Colonists didn't get much out of the war so they shouldn't pay taxes	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
King George must force colonists to pay the taxes	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Not fair to tax without people being able to have a say in them; voting	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	5
You couldn't get tea if you didn't represent the king	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Pre 4. What was the Boston Tea Party?													
I don't know much about it	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	3	3	6
English had a tea party in Boston	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Selling tea with a large tax on it	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
A get-together to show how powerful the leader was	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Some people were angry about the price of tea so they threw it in the Boston Harbor	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sold the tea door to door and were angry because the price was too high	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1

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Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Post 5. What was the Boston Tea Party?													
Sons of Liberty dressed as Indians, dumped tea into Boston Harbor; protest against taxes on tea	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	10
Post 5a. Was it a good idea to dump the tea?													
I don't know	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Yes, it's OK to protest	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	4	4
Yes and no	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
No, the British closed Boston Harbor	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Pre 5a. What was the Declaration of Independence?													
I don't know; not sure	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	4
Declared that we weren't ruled by England anymore	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
A vote for freedom	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
A signed document	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	3
Pre 5b. When was it signed?													
July 4	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	4	2	6
July 4, 1776	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Post 6. What was the Declaration of Independence?													
Document signed by colonial leaders saying America was free from England	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	6
English signed independence for the United States	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
A document about our rights	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Not sure	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2

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Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre 6. What was in the Declaration of Independence?													
Doesn't know or guesses incorrectly	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	3
Declared freedom from British rule	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Something about freedom	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	4
Colonies became one country	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
Post 7. What was in the Declaration of Independence?													
We are free from England	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	5	3	8
Don't know; not sure	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
It lists our rights	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pre 7. What did King George think of the colonists?													
I don't know	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	3	5
He was angry, thought they were bad	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	5
Post 8. What did King George think of the colonists?													
I don't know	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3
Thought they were bad or selfish or greedy	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	4
They should pay the taxes and not complain	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Sent soldiers to make colonists pay taxes	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
He was angry (thought they were stupid for separating)	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	5

Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre 8. Did all the colonists want to break away from England?													
I don't know; not sure	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
All or most of them wanted to break away	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	2	4
Some didn't want to break away	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	4
Pre 9. What happened when there was disagreement among the colonists?													
I don't know; not sure	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	3	3	6
There was a war	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	2
Post 9a. Did all of the colonists want to break away or just some of them?													
Some or most wanted to break away	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	4	4	8
Patriots disagreed with Loyalist Tories	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4	8
All (or 99%) wanted to break away	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
Post 9b. What happened when people disagreed?													
I don't know	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	2	5
When there was disagreement the war started	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	3
King George sent soldiers who were helped by the Tories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
The United States won	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Post 10. Eventually the war started. What happened and why?													
The United States/colonists won the war	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	10
Battle of Lexington	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	6
Battle at Concord	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	5
Other battles	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	3	5
Boston Massacre	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	3	3	6
Cornwallis surrendered	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
Boston Tea Party started the fighting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Pre 10. Who were some of the leaders of the American Revolution?													
I don't know (or no answer)	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	4	5
George Washington	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Thomas Jefferson	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
John Quincy Adams	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
William Bradford	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
John Smith	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Post 11. Who were some of the leaders of the American Revolution?													
George Washington	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	4	7
John Adams	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
Johnny Tremaine	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
Paul Revere	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	6
Dr. Prescott	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Francis Marion (Swamp Fox)	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	3	6
Johnny Dawes	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
John Hancock	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2
Sybil Ludington	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
Molly Pitcher	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
I don't know	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gives details on two leaders	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	9

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Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre 11. Who were some of the women who participated in the Revolutionary War?													
I don't know	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	4	4	8
Sadie Thompson, Betsy Ross	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Nurses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Post 12. Who were some of the women who participated in the Revolutionary War?													
Sybil Ludington	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	5
Molly Pitcher	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	9
Deborah Sampson	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	4
Mary Corbett	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mary Hayes	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Frances Drake	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Nancy Hart	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Phyllis Wheatley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Abigail Adams	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Lydia Darragh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Mary Carey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Louisa May Alcott	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Student gives details on two women	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	3	7
Pre 12. After the Revolutionary War, what had changed?													
I don't know; not sure	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	3
Free country; became the United States	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	2	5
President in charge	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	3
Expanded the country	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
Had governors before the Revolution	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Congress was created	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
People voted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Kept on going with everyday lives	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

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Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Post 13. What happened after the Revolutionary War was over?													
I don't know; not sure	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Colonists declared their freedom	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	4
Colonists were now free of England	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Colonists threw a party; celebrated	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Got a president and made rules; voted	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
Pre 13. How were the 13 United States different from the 13 colonies?													
I don't know; not sure	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
United States was one country (colonies were 13 separate small countries)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	4
Before the Revolution, colonies had governors	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	4
After the Revolution, the United States had a president	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	4	3	7
Before the Revolution, the king was in charge	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	4
Post 14. After the Revolution, what had changed?													
Colonies free; no longer ruled by England	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	2	6
President was in charge	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	10
Created one government	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
People voted	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	4	3	7
Made laws	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	3
Not sure about details	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	3
The slaves and people got religious freedom back	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
People moved around in the United States	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1

Table 4 (cont'd.)

	Jason	Tim	Mark	Brad	Ned	Teri	Sue	Helen	Kay	Rita			
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	F			
Achievement Level	H	H	A	A	L	H	H	A	A	L	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre 14. How was the new government of the United States formed?													
I don't know; not sure	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	2	5
Voted for new leaders	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	5
Post 15. How was the new government formed in the United States?													
Voting (but with no details provided on the process)	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	3
Made laws	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Made the Constitution	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Got a president	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
I don't know; not sure	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	3	5
Post 16. What are some of the surprising things you learned about this American Revolutionary period?													
None	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Fight for freedom	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Details about George Washington	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Details about Swamp Fox	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Fighting methods	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
King George's rule	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Tea Party, Boston Massacre	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	2
Details about the period	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	2
Women in the war	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2

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grouped by gender (M/F), and within gender by achievement level. Jason, Tim, Teri, and Sue were high achievers (H); Mark, Brad, Helen, and Kay were average achievers (A); and Ned and Rita were low achievers (L). (Names of students are pseudonyms.)

We began both pre- and postunit interviews with a general question that invited students to tell as much as they knew about the birth of the United States as a nation. We followed this initial question with queries designed to encourage students to become gradually more and more specific about what they knew and understood. We generally followed the chronology of the period, beginning with the difficulties created by the French and Indian War and ending with a question about how the new U.S. government was formed. We asked additional, more probing-type questions during the postunit interview, anticipating greater depth of knowledge following the unit experience. However, these additional questions generally followed the chronological format set by the initial protocol. At the end of the postunit interview, we asked if students were surprised by anything they had learned during the unit.

Pre-Question #1. How did the U.S. become an independent country? Why?

Three of the 10 students could not respond even to probes. Jason stated that the U.S. became an independent country by fighting and winning the Revolutionary War and thereby gaining freedom from the British. Helen said that the colonists had a constitution and that they were after religious freedom. The latter half of Helen's response appears to be a conflation with the Puritan's goal of escaping religious persecution in England, something she had recently learned about in the preceding unit on colonization. When pressed by probes for at least some account of the birth of the U.S., Sue and Rita suggested that the war was fought for freedom, Mark and Kay guessed that people fought over the land (without elaborating), and Teri related ideas about

settling the New World (also a response most likely tied to the colonies unit). Thus, only Jason had specific prior knowledge. The other six students who responded to the question produced guesses similar to those reported by McKeown and Beck (1990).

Post-Question #1. How did the U.S. become an independent country? Why?

Following the unit, the students were able to address the question with ease. Four students, Jason, Ned, Kay, and Rita, noted that the patriots fought the British and won the Revolutionary War. Jason added that the Patriots won freedom from King George and that the central issue over which the war was fought involved taxes imposed on the colonists by the king. Winning freedom was also mentioned by five other interviewees: Mark, Brad, Teri, Sue, and Helen. The tax issue emerged with references to the phrase "no taxation without representation" by five other students in addition to Jason. Helen was the only student to mention the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* as a freedom-providing act (although she included Johnny Tremaine among the signers). The "I don't know" response dropped out completely. Here are several representative responses.

> *Jason*: The Patriots won the Revolutionary War. They beat the English. [How did they get into a war?] They wanted their freedom. [Why?] They weren't free before. England made them pay taxes because of a war that the English fought. [To whom?] The king.

> *Tim*: King George started to tax the colonists on tea and started to send his British soldiers over here to make sure they were doing OK. Then King George said the soldiers had to move in with the colonists. If they knocked on your door, you had to let them in and let them live with you. There were taxes on about everything. [What effect did that have on the colonists?] They were mad about it. They had to pay taxes for the war even though they didn't really fight in the war. King George decided to tax people on tea and have them pay for the war.

> *Teri*: They didn't like having a king in charge of them. They wanted to be free of him. [Why didn't they like the king?] Because he was putting taxes on everything.

Sue: They were sick and tired of the king taxing them and the Redcoats killing people because of the Boston Massacre. They had a war and the last war was in Yorktown and the colonists won so they were free from King George so they could live like they wanted to.

Helen: I really don't know how that happened for sure. I know John Hancock and John Adams and Johnny Tremaine, and someone else, I can't remember who, but they signed the *Declaration of Independence* and that meant that our country was free from England. [So just by signing that piece of paper, that meant they were free?] Yeah. Before they signed the paper they had to win a war first. If they had lost, it would have kept England in control of them. [When you say "they," who are you talking about?] The colonists had to win the war because they were fighting for freedom. If the colonist had lost, then England would still have control over the 13 colonies.

Pre-Question #2. Colonists changed their minds about being under British control. Why?

Having been generally unable to provide much information in response to the first preunit question, most of the students seemed equally stymied by the second one. Five said that they did not know or could not remember anything about a shift in colonial attitudes about British rule. Brad, Kay, and Rita echoed general comments about the desire of the colonists to be free and live their own lives. Jason made reference to a mean king, while Tim wagered that the change in attitude might have been connected to control over the land and may have had something to do with the *Declaration of Independence*. Rita was the only student to suggest a specifically correct response, and she seemed unsure of herself.

Tim: Maybe for more land and just a lot more space for people to live. [Are you guessing at that?] I don't really know. I don't know if the *Declaration of Independence* has anything to do with it.

Brad: I'm not sure, but it doesn't seem like it would be fun to be ruled around. They probably wanted their own way and their own lives.

Kay: They discovered new land and they said, "If I could be free, I could do anything I want."

Rita: I think the king wanted too much. [Too much what?] Too much gold and stuff like that from the colonies and they said, "We're no longer yours. We're not going to follow your rules or anything."

Post-Question #2. Colonists changed their minds about being under British control. Why?

After the unit, students exhibited a much stronger ability to provide information. Again, the "I don't know" response disappeared. All 10 students related the change in colonial sentiment to the taxation issue and several of them connected it with the French and Indian War, a point stressed by their teacher. Four students again made references to the too powerful and/or unfair king as a cause for the shift in attitudes in the colonies. One student each mentioned (in connection with the tax issue) the Boston Massacre, the closing of Boston Harbor, the Quartering Act, and the Stamp Act. Jason continued to concentrate on the freedom issue.

Jason: They wanted to be free. [Weren't they free before that?] No. [What was the problem?] They had to do things by the king's law. [Did the king do something they didn't like?] All the taxes. [Explain what you mean by that?] The English fought a war with the Indians and they had to pay all the money for the war. The king made taxes to pay for the war. [Who was supposed to take care of the taxes?] The colonists and they didn't like it.

Mark: Because after the French and Indian War, the colonists thought that King George should pay for it because it was his land they were fighting on. [What did King George think?] He thought they should pay. He didn't want to pay the bill so he started taxing a number of items. [Who's supposed to be paying for the taxes?] The colonists.

Ned: Because King George was taxing them and they didn't like it. [Why did King George start taxing them?] Because he needed money to pay bills and stuff. [Do you know how he got bills to pay? Why did he have such big bills? Had something happened?] I think so.

Teri: Taxes. [Anything else?] There was a war and the colonists had to pay for the war and they didn't want to. [What war?] Forgot. [The French and Indian War?] Yeah. [Who fought in it?] French and Indians. [You said "they" had to pay for this war. Who's "they?"] The colonists.

Sue: Because he was taxing them and it was getting out of hand because he was taxing them so much they were going poor and he sent over Redcoats and King George made them knock on a door and the people that lived there had to shelter them and give them food whether they wanted to or not. I would think King George wasn't a very fair king. [Why was the taxation thing a problem?] He was taxing everything--even tea. Then he sent over

stamps on things which was called the Stamp Act and they still had to pay more taxes and they were finally getting sick of it. [Why did he want to tax them so much?] Because he couldn't pay for the war. [What war was that?] The French and Indian War.

Helen: No, I don't know. I think the king was King George. Well, the Tories . . . [Who were the Tories?] They were people who didn't think the war was right and they liked King George a lot. King George made the people pay for the war because it wasn't on his land. [What war was this?] Revolutionary War. It wasn't on his land and he didn't want to pay for it, so he ran out of money and made the colonists pay because it was on their land. Then he got a letter from the Continental Congress saying that he has to stop charging them. So the people didn't like him anymore because he made them pay.

Rita: Because the king made them pay for the war they had with the French and Indians and they didn't like that. [Why] Because when King George made them pay, he also got his profit off it too.

Post-Question #3. What were the problems caused by the French and Indian War?

Hoping to encounter an increase in sophistication concerning their understanding of some of the causes linked to outbreak of war between the colonies and England, we added this question to the postunit protocol. Several students had connected the taxation issue to the French and Indian War in post-question #2 and this question asked them to elaborate specifically on their responses. It also asked the others who had not made the connection earlier to display, if they could, their understanding of the relationship.

The students produced a range of responses. Tim told a story about how the British had won the war and thereby protected colonial territory. This was followed by a request that the colonists help pay for the war through increases in taxes. Jason, Brad, Sue and Rita made similar points.

The interconnections students were asked to make appeared to cause difficulties for several of them. Mark, also absent for part of the unit, simply retold the story of colonial refusals to honor the tax demands. He then mentioned, in answer to a probe for more specific information, that the King George believed that the colonists had been fighting on his land and therefore

should pay taxes. Helen, in a fanciful storytelling style so common to her response pattern (see VanSledright & Brophy, 1991, 1992, on this point), told of the French and Indians winning the war, subsequent anger by King George, and his resolve to win the territory back through the Revolutionary War. Kay also became confused and attributed victory to the French and Indians.

These latter responses point up the degree to which these two closely connected wars (the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars) need to be carefully introduced and taught to students with ample opportunity to assess students' growing knowledge, lest students develop misunderstandings. This is particularly important because students often must wait until eighth grade to deal with this material again in any systematic fashion.

> *Tim:* Yeah, the taxes were sort of because King George taxed the colonists for the French and Indian War. He could have paid for it himself but he didn't want to, so he just decided to let the colonists pay for it. [Was there some reason he wanted the colonists to pay for it?] Not really. He just didn't want to pay for it. [Who was fighting whom?] The French and Indians were fighting against the British in the territories and unknown lands--the western part. [Were the colonists really involved in this war?] No. [What were they fighting about?] I think the Indians and the French wanted the western part and the English fought them off so they could get it right now. [Who won that war?] The British. [Did fighting that war benefit the colonists? Was it a good thing that the British won that war?] Yeah, because if they hadn't, the French and Indians could have took over the colonies.
>
> *Mark:* [Can you tell me more about that?] No, because I think I was gone when we did that part. [Did King George want the colonists to pay for this war?] Yeah. The colonists said they weren't going to pay the taxes. [Why did King George want the colonists to pay for the French and Indian War?] Because he thought they were the ones who were fighting on his land so they should have to pay.
>
> *Brad:* The colonists didn't want to pay for it and the king taxed them, mainly tea and some other products used in everyday life, and then he sent over the Redcoats because the colonists went under self-control. [What does that mean?] Getting out of hand. The Sons of Liberty dumped the tea into the harbor and that got out of hand, so they sent over Redcoats and the Redcoats shot somebody because he got hit with a snowball and those are some of the problems that were caused by that.

Ned: It caused King George to have higher bills. [Why?] Because he sent troops over and he couldn't afford it. [Tell about the French and Indian War. Who fought in this war?] The French and Indians. [Who was on which side?] The French and Indians were against the British. [Who won?] The French and Indians. [I think the British won. You said this was expensive for King George. Why was that?] Because he had to send people over. [Why did he make the colonists pay the taxes? Why didn't he just pay for it?] He didn't have enough money. [Well why did he want the colonists to pay for it?] Because he said it was over in their land. It wasn't really his.

Teri: Taxes. [Any other problems?] Not that I can think of.

Helen: The colonists kept moving over and over in this area where the Indians were. Well, they moved into the Indians land and said, "This is my land now. It belongs to King George." Well, the Indians and the French people all lived there and the French and Indians got together and fought King George. [Why did this French and Indian War cause problems?] That was one of the things that led up to the Revolutionary War. [Explain that to me. How do you mean?] The French and Indian War took place about one year before the Revolutionary War, so the French and Indian War happened and I think the French and Indians won, but King George didn't like it and he said, "How can they win? We're stronger." So they fought and that led up to the Revolutionary War which took place for nine years. [Why did the French and Indian War lead up to the Revolutionary War?] It made King George mad.

Kay: The French came to the new land and the Indians were there and the Indians got mad and wanted to fight a war, but the French won because they had guns and knives and stuff. [Were the British also involved in the French and Indian War?] Um hum. [What side were the British people on?] Probably the French. [So the British won too?] I'm not sure. [Do you know some of the problems that were caused by the French and Indian War?] No.

Pre-Question #3. What does "no taxation without representation" mean?

All 10 students indicated that they did not know or had never heard the phrase before. Guessing, Helen told a story about taxes, selling tea door to door, and concerns about the rising cost of tea. Rita, also guessing, narrated a brief story of an unnamed king, taxes for land, and colonists "going on strike." Given students' unfamiliarity with the subject and the rather abstract nature of the phrase, their responses here (and perhaps even these two guesses) seem reasonable. McKeown and Beck (1990) reported a similar lack of

knowledge, but ability of some students to make educated guesses, in response to a similar preunit question about "no taxation without representation."

> *Helen*: I never heard it before. [Can you figure out what it means or would you just be guessing at it?] I'd probably be guessing at it. [Take a try.] Before, when Lincoln was president they sold tea door to door and they kept raising the taxes and people fought against it, that the taxes were so high. [Did you study this?] Part of it is from my knowledge and part of it, I was just guessing. [Did you read a book about this stuff?] I've read it and Mrs. Teacher teaches us some every now and then about it and I learned some from fourth grade.
>
> *Rita* No. Maybe the king wants tax for the land. [It's says, "No taxation without representation."] They were going on strike. Maybe they don't want the king to own that land and they're not going to pay taxes for it. What was the other part? [Representation.] I don't know what that means. I think it means you represent something. You're special.

Post-Question #4. What does "no taxation without representation" mean?

After the studying the Revolutionary period, Jason and Teri could not respond to this question, and Mark could only guess. The uncertainty of these three students may have been connected to their absences during the unit. Helen's misunderstandings and misconceptions continued. When probed, she indicated that those who failed to represent King George were denied access to tea. She then pointed out that the entire idea was confusing to her. This is a bit troubling given the fact that the teacher expended some effort trying to help students understand the factors involved in this famous phrase. As Helen points out, the teacher had erected a banner in the room, clearly depicting the phrase, as a reminder to the students of its importance to the colonial cause. Tim also had trouble with the phrase.

> *Tim*: "Don't tax us without . . . (pause)" [What does it mean to have representation?] Like no taxation without . . . they didn't get much out of that war, so they shouldn't have to pay taxes for all of it. [Is that phrase confusing?] Yeah. [Are you sure you understand it or is it difficult to understand?] I know what they're saying but . . . [How did they decide to make taxes? Not why, but how did they go about making tax laws for the colonists? Who made those laws?] King George and people like that. [What did the colonists want?] They wanted supplies to be shipped to America.

Helen: I don't know. We had a banner. [What does that mean?] I think it means you can't have . . . if you don't represent King George, I think you can't get a certain product. I think it was tea. I think you couldn't get tea if you don't represent the king. [Is this confusing for you?] Yeah, it's real confusing.

For the other five students, Brad, Ned, Sue, Kay, and Rita, the question posed less trouble. Each in a slightly different way was able to attribute the phrase to the idea that it was "unfair" to tax the colonists if they had no say in the imposition of those taxes. Brad, Ned, Sue, and Rita mentioned a voting process involved in the passage of tax laws and said that the colonists had no opportunity to vote. Kay connected the taxation issue to tea and the Stamp Act. These five students appeared to have benefited from the teacher's efforts to explain the phrase and its importance.

In the context of findings reported by McKeown and Beck (1990), the fact that 50% of these students could accurately explain the "no taxation without representation" phrase is noteworthy. In addition to interviewing 35 fifth graders about to begin a unit on the American Revolution, McKeown and Beck interviewed 37 sixth graders who had experienced the unit the year before. Although many of these 37 sixth graders recognized that the "no taxation without representation" phrase had something to do with the American Revolution, only two of them could explain it accurately. We do not know whether the five students quoted below will be able to produce similarly accurate explanations a year later, but the general pattern of student responses to this postunit question suggests that, with careful teaching, difficult abstract phrases and their conceptual underpinnings are not beyond the understanding of fifth graders. (We suspect that, had Jason, Mark, and Teri been present during the discussion of the phrase, they too would have been able to respond as did the five students who answered with a reasonable understanding.) To the extent

that those five students are "average," we would argue that this finding is generalizable.

> *Brad*: They were saying it was not fair for King George to tax them when they can't share their feelings and say what they have to say. It's kind of like a vote. If we got a president and we didn't get to vote what we wanted--it was just government, that wouldn't be fair. That's what King George was doing. He was taxing them without them having their share of comments on it.
>
> *Ned:* The colonists didn't want to be taxed without voting on it. [Why didn't they have a vote on it?] Because King George needed the money and he just said they would pay. [So when they said "no taxation without representation," what did they mean?] They didn't want to be taxed.
>
> *Sue*: You can't tax us without us voting on it. [Was this because they were mad at the king?] Yeah. [Did the colonists want to be able to vote on the new taxes?] Yeah. They really didn't want the taxes but if he was going to tax them, they wanted to vote.
>
> *Kay:* No taxes without us making it be right or declaring we want taxes. [Who was doing the taxing?] King George. [So the colonists wanted to be able to say whether they wanted taxes or not?] Right.
>
> *Rita:* They say that King George can't tax them without them voting on it. The colonist wanted to be able to vote on what taxes they would pay. They probably wanted that England would pay some taxes too.

Pre-Question #4. What was the Boston Tea Party?

Six students said they did not know in response to this question. Jason speculated that the English had a tea party in Boston. Mark mentioned that "they" were selling tea on which an exorbitant tax had been placed. Brad thought it was a version of the Potlatch custom he had learned about when studying the Northwest Coastal tribes of Native Americans. Helen clung to her "door to door" tea-selling operation. Only Teri described the event as an outgrowth of frustration by a group of colonists which resulted in chests of tea been jettisoned into Boston Harbor. Again, these responses should come as no surprise given the limited knowledge students brought with them to the study of the Revolutionary period.

Mark: They were going around selling tea and they had too big of a tax on it. [How did you know about this, did you read it in a book?] Yeah. I checked a book out from the library.

Brad: I think it was a get together so one group of people like their leader could show how brave and powerful they were. [Can you tell me more about that? What happened specifically?] I think the town's king wanted to show how big and powerful he was. I think he made presents and gifts and would give them to the people that came. [Where did you learn this?] I'm kind of guessing but I think it's like the Indians over in the Northwest region. I think it's kind of like that. [Do you know where Boston is?] I think Massachusetts. I'm not too sure about it. [Have you ever heard of the Boston Tea Party before?] I might have.

Teri: I know! I know! There was a ship and it carried a lot of tea to Boston and some people went down to the ship and started throwing all the tea over. [Why did they pitch the tea overboard? Why didn't they just take it home with them?] Well, there was this one guy that was selling it for too much. [Were they mad about that? Was that the idea?] Yup. [Where did you learn about this?] In a book, something like "John Adams" and I got it out of the library.

Sue: I don't know. I've heard of it but I don't know anything about it. [Did you read about it, or what?] Sometimes the teacher would tell us about something and sometimes somebody would mention something and they'd start getting into the Boston Tea Party, but that's all I know.

Helen: They took tea door to door. [Wait a minute. Who's they?] I don't know what they're called . . . not the president but an assistant or whatever they called them back then. They took tea door to door and they sold the tea and they kept raising the taxes because they weren't getting enough money for it so they kept raising the taxes and . . . [Who was raising the taxes?] The president, or the people that were selling it. They raised the taxes because they weren't getting enough money so the people didn't think that was fair, so they kind of went on a strike or they wouldn't buy tea unless the taxes went down. [Is that what the Boston Tea Party was?] It was either that or a war, but I'm not sure.

Kay: I've heard of it but I don't know what it is.

Post-Question #5. What was the Boston Tea Party?

During the unit, the teacher spent some time with this famous story and students seemed very interested in it. As a result, all 10 students could narrate the account of the Sons of Liberty dressing as Native Americans, boarding a British frigate, and dumping chests of tea into the harbor in protest against "unfair" taxes. Several of the students were quite animated in their retellings.

Jason: It was when the Sons of Liberty went and dumped tea in the Boston Harbor because King George had taxes on the tea. [Why didn't they just steal it?] I don't know. [Do you think it was a good idea?] Yeah. [Why?] Because you wouldn't have to pay the tea taxes. [But you wouldn't have any tea, then, either. Do you see what I mean? So do you think that was a good idea?] I don't know.

Tim: The Sons of Liberty were a secret club, Americans, and they were a club that was against King George and one night they decided to get on the British ships and dump all the tea. [Why didn't they just steal the tea instead of dumping it into Boston Harbor?] It was to tell them they didn't like what they were doing. They were so angry they just dumped all of it. [Do you think that was a good idea?] Yeah. [Why?] They knew what they were doing, but then King George closed down Boston Harbor and it was where they got all their supplies from.

Mark: It was when the Sons of Liberty dressed up as Indians and broke the boxes of tea with axes and cut open the bags of tea and dumped it into Boston Harbor. [Why didn't they just take it home with them?] Because the ships that had the tea on it were for the soldiers and the soldiers got their tea free and the colonists had to pay taxes to pay for theirs. [So was this kind of like a protest?] Yeah. [Do you think that was a good idea for them to dump the tea in the harbor?] No. [Why not?] Because after that, King George closed the Boston Harbor so no tea could get in or out.

Brad: The Sons of Liberty were . . . [Who were the Sons of Liberty? Were they Redcoats?] No. They were on the colonists' side. They were a secret group and they met at the Liberty Tree. There weren't too many people in the Sons of Liberty and they decided to go dump the tea instead of having to pay taxes. [Why did they want to dump the tea?] It's basically what was in the harbor and it was what he was mainly taxing them for. They did it to get back at King George. [Why didn't they just take it home with them instead of just dumping it in the harbor?] I'm not sure. [Why?] If they took it home, they could get caught and then the Redcoats would know who took it. But when they dumped it, the king couldn't find out who specifically dumped the tea. It would be kind of obvious if they took a lot of tea home. [Do you think it was a very good idea to do that?] No. [Why not?] At the time, it seemed kind of a reasonable thing, but there could be more reasonable things to do besides that. I don't think they should have done it. I wouldn't know that King George would close down the harbor, but he would probably do other mean things, like when he sent over the Redcoats, he told them to tell the colonists to share their homes with them and to feed them and clothe them and give them shelter.

Ned: It was when men dressed up like Indians and got on a boat with all the tea and they threw it all overboard. [Why didn't they just take it home with them?] I don't know. [Do you think it was a good idea for them to throw the tea in the harbor?] I don't know.

Teri: It was where the Sons of Liberty dressed up as Indians and they went to the next shipment of tea and they dumped it all into the Boston Harbor. [Why?] Because there were taxes on the tea and they didn't like it. [Why didn't they just take the tea home with them?] Because they didn't want to pay for it. [Why didn't they steal it.] I don't know. [Do you think that was a good idea to do that?] Yes and no. It's not good for the water, but I guess it was. [Why was it a good idea?] I don't know.

Sue: It's where the Sons of Liberty dressed up like Indians and when England sent over ships of tea, they went over and cut open the crates and threw the tea into the Boston Harbor. [Why did they throw it into the harbor instead of just taking it home with them?] Because people would have to pay taxes for it. [Why didn't they just steal it?] I don't know. [Who were the Sons of Liberty?] The colonists. They were getting mad at King George so they would have meetings to discuss what they should do about it. [Do you think it was a good idea for them to throw the tea into the harbor?] With what happened after, no. [What do you mean?] King George did this "Intolerable Act" where he closed up Boston Harbor so no ships could get in or out so the colonists couldn't get food. [That came as a result of them throwing the tea into the harbor?] Yeah. It was a good idea before the Intolerable Acts because King George was taxing them so much and people got so mad that they had to do something. [So you think they were right to throw that tea overboard as kind of a protest?] Yeah.

Helen Well, the Sons of Liberty--that was Paul Revere and some other people--the Sons of Liberty dressed up in these uniforms, and personally I thought they were pretty ugly, but they dressed up in these uniforms and went out to the harbor bay and they dumped all this tea into the harbor bay. A little while after that, King George shut the harbor bay down. [Who did the tea belong to?] King George was selling it, but the Sons of Liberty got a hold of it and dumped it out into the harbor bay. [Were the Sons of Liberty Tories?] No, they didn't like King George at all. [Why did they dump it in the water? Why didn't they just take it home with them?] I don't know. I just heard they dumped it in the water. I would drink it because I like tea. [Did you think it was a good idea to dump all that tea in the water.] Yes, because King George was making the colonists pay for the war and they got revenge by dumping his tea in the water so he couldn't sell it.

Kay: The Boston Tea Party is when the Sons of Liberty at night came onto the ships full of tea and they took all the tea and threw it into the Boston Harbor. All the people threw it in and King George got really mad and it started the Revolutionary War. [Why did they throw it in the harbor instead of just taking it home with them?] They threw it in the harbor so there was no evidence they had took it. [Do you think it was a good idea for them to do that--throw that tea in the harbor?] Yes. [Why?] Because that told King George we didn't like him raising the taxes so we just threw all the tea away and wasted it. [So it was kind of like a protest?] Right.

Rita: It's where the Sons of Liberty dressed up as Indians and they only took axes and ripped open the boxes of tea and they dumped into the Boston Harbor. Then they cleaned up the ship. [Who were the Sons of Liberty?] They were a secret club that was making it clear that "We're not going to pay taxes." [Do you think that was a good idea?] Because they were fed up with King George.

Post-Question #5a. Do you think it was a good idea to do this (dump tea into the harbor)?

As the quotes above indicate, we probed students to find out about the attitudes they were developing concerning the wisdom and morality of the protest actions displayed by the colonists. Although the students' teacher never addressed these issues directly during the unit (preferring the standard, colonial-favored account of the period), we were curious about students' developing points of view.

Jason and Ned were unsure about the wisdom of dumping tea into the harbor in protest. Sue, Helen, Kay, and Rita thought it was an effective method of protest, while Tim and Teri equivocated. Mark and Brad thought the idea questionable, considering, as they noted, that King George followed the protest act by closing Boston Harbor. The students judged the act mostly by its effects (e.g., practicality) rather than by applying moral or ethical principles.

Pre-Question #5a. What was the Declaration of Independence? #5b. When was it signed?

Jason correctly identified the *Declaration* as a document declaring the colonists' freedom from British rule. The remaining students gave vague and only partially correct responses or else guessed incorrectly. Tim and Helen confused the *Declaration* with the *Constitution*. Brad and Sue knew that it had something to do with freedom but could not elaborate. Teri, Helen, and Kay understood that the *Declaration* was some kind of document that had to be signed, but they could not elaborate on the nature of the document. McKeown and Beck (1990) reported that only 26% of the fifth graders they interviewed could

explain the *Declaration of Independence*. Another 39% produced "document stew" responses that confused the *Declaration* with other documents.

Six of the 10 students correctly named July fourth as the signing date, although only Tim and Mark also identified the year as 1776. The fact that 6 students knew the signing date even though they could not describe the document itself suggests that they learned the date somewhere along the way in connection with Independence Day festivities. That all but Jason were ignorant or vague about the history behind Independence Day can be attributed to the fact that the holiday falls during the summer months when students are on extended recess. Thus, they know less about it than they do about Thanksgiving, Presidents' Day, and other national holidays that are "celebrated" in school.

> *Jason:* It was declaring that we weren't ruled by the English anymore. [Who is we?] The 13 colonies. [Did they write it on the wall or where was it put down or did they just go around saying to each other?] It was written on paper. [Do you know who wrote it?] Benjamin Franklin, John Adams. [Do you know when it was written?] I can't remember.
>
> *Tim:* I get it confused with the *Constitution* a lot. [Could not elaborate in response to probes.] [Do you know when it was signed?] 1776. [Do you know what day?] July 4.
>
> *Brad:* I think it was a vote for freedom. I'm not too sure, though. I think it has something to do with the Fourth of July. [When was it signed?] Oh, I get it. It was kind of like a contract. [When was it signed?] I think close to the early 1900s.
>
> *Teri:* It's this thing . . . John Adams had to sign it. [When was it signed?] I can't remember.
>
> *Sue:* It's for people's freedom. [What people's freedom?] Slaves and ours. [Do you know when it was signed?] July 4th.
>
> *Helen:* Independence Day, the Fourth of July, that's the *Declaration of Independence*. They signed the *Constitution* on July Fourth. [Do you know what year?] 1760 something.
>
> *Kay:* It's when the president signed a paper making us the United States, I think. [Do you know when it was signed?] I don't know.

Post-Question #6. What was the Declaration of Independence?

Following the unit, responses to this question improved somewhat. Six students noted that it was a document signed by colonial leaders effectively separating the colonies from British control. Sue noted that it involved the rights of the colonists. Ned and Teri still said they were unsure about the document and what it meant. Jason, positing a rather different idea, said that it involved the English signing independence for the United States

Jason: It was where the English signed the United States independence and it was free. [The English signed this or the Patriots?] Both.

Tim: It was written and it was so that they'd be one country. They wouldn't belong to England. They would be Americans. It was a document written by all the leaders from all the colonies.

Mark: It was a document that was declaring their freedom from King George. [Do you know who signed it or who wrote it?] John Hancock, Samuel Adams, but I'm not sure about anybody else that signed it. I don't know who wrote it or anything.

Ned: July fourth a lot of famous people signed . . . (pause) [Was it a piece of paper or a document or something?] Yeah. [Who were some of the famous people?] Not sure.

Teri: I didn't really study it all that much, so I don't know a lot about it. [Tell me what you do know.] Some people signed it--John Adams.

Sue: A whole bunch of people signed it and it just says that we have rights and it's just the rights we have on a piece of paper. [Can you tell me about what it says in there?] No. [Have you read it?] No.

Helen: John Hancock, John Adams, Paul Revere, and Johnny Tremaine all signed a piece of paper and it said that our country is free. They all signed a document that our country was free from New England.

Kay: The Declaration of Independence was where a group of men that signed a sheet that told that we had freedom in the United States.

Pre-Question #6. What was in the Declaration of Independence?

This follow-up to Pre-Question #5 emphasized the word "in" in an effort to see if students could provide a more substantive description of the content of the *Declaration*. Responses to both Pre-Question #5 and Pre-Question #6

were taken into account in characterizing students' answers to Pre-Question #6 as shown in Table 4.

Jason could not elaborate on his previous statement that the *Declaration* was a statement by the 13 colonies that they would not be ruled by the English anymore. Some of the other students did elaborate on their answers to Pre-Question #5 as they responded to Pre-Question #6, but none of them developed a specifically accurate characterization of the *Declaration* comparable to Jason's. Four students knew or guessed that the *Declaration* said something about freedom but were not able to elaborate accurately. Two students described the *Declaration* as a document that brought the colonies together as a single country. These responses were better suited to the *Constitution* than the *Declaration* because they placed more emphasis on establishing a new country than on declaring freedom from England. The remaining three students simply could not respond to the questions or could only guess inaccurately.

> *Mark:* It said people would work together to make it a better country and that they could be free to do whatever they wanted.
>
> *Brad:* I think it's something about freedom and getting their share of the land.
>
> *Helen:* It says, this paper means that you are free and you can live in peace and you don't have to do what other people say, unless they're your parents or something because you are now free. Blacks are not slaves anymore and they have a right. John Hancock signed. [Did other people sign it too?] I don't think so.

Post-Question #7. What was in the Declaration of Independence?

Following the unit, eight students expressed the idea that the document declared colonial freedom from Great Britain. None were able to offer much substance beyond rudimentary notions of freedom and separation from the British. The teacher had not emphasized study of the document itself. She demonstrated greater interest in her students developing a general idea about

the Declaration, saving the details for later grades. Eight of the interviewees were able to provide this general idea. Teri could not respond and Sue confused the *Declaration* with the *Bill of Rights*.

These responses concerning the *Declaration of Independence* compared favorably with those reported by McKeown and Beck (1990). Of the sixth graders they interviewed, only 36% unambiguously described the *Declaration* as a proclamation of freedom. The other 64% produced "document stew" responses that confused the *Declaration* with other documents such as the *Constitution* or the *Bill of Rights*. It is possible that the students we interviewed will develop more of these "document stew" responses in the next year or two as they begin to learn more about other famous documents. McKeown and Beck reported that the frequency of such confusions actually increased from fifth grade to sixth grade because the students had been exposed to more information but had not yet sorted it out and developed stable understandings of the different content and functions of the different documents. Many of the students whom we interviewed are likely to undergo similar confusion before developing stable understandings of the *Declaration* as the initial statement of independence from Britain, the *Articles of Confederation* as the document establishing our first form of government, the *Constitution* as the document that established the government that has endured since, and the *Bill of Rights* as the first 10 amendments to that *Constitution*.

> *Jason:* That the United States is now free from England. [Anything else that you know?] We the people.
>
> *Tim:* It says they were now free from England and we need to join together and be one country, American, not England. And they should join together because they were sort of separate before.
>
> *Ned:* It said that America was free. [Did it say other things in there too?] I don't know.

Teri: I don't know.

Sue: It says that we have rights--it's just the rights we have on a piece of paper.

Kay: It says something like the United States of America has a freedom and the right to do anything they want. [So they were free from . . . ?] King George. [Who signed it?] George Washington, Samuel Adams, Paul Revere. [Did some of the Sons of Liberty sign it?] Yeah, most of them did.

Rita: It probably said, "We declare our independence from England and we don't have to go by any of those rules."

Pre-Question #7. What did King George think about the colonists?

With this question, we sought to probe the degree to which students may have formed perceptions of events from other than the colonial purview. Having little general perspective on the whole of the period itself, students had difficulty with this question prior to the unit. Five students could not respond and the other five speculated that the king was probably upset or angry with the colonists. Tim suggested that perhaps the colonists themselves were unfair. These five students appeared to be building deductively from what they had been learning from the previous preunit questions. None of them offered their response with much confidence.

Jason: Bad. [Why?] I don't know.

Tim: That they were being unfair to him because he supplied all the ships and all that. They never gave him anything in return. [Are you guessing?] Yes.

Brad: I think he was thinking he was going to get a lot of land and when they started arguing with the king over in the colonies, the King of England was probably getting pretty angry and probably wanted to start a war. [What would a war do for the king?] I might give him more land.

Sue: He might have been mad. I don't know.

Rita: He probably didn't have any feelings for other people and just said . . . he's probably selfish. [Did he have any reason to be upset with the colonists?] He might have been upset, but he didn't have any

reason because it's his fault that they don't want to listen to him, because he asks too much. [How do you know?] You can just figure it out. Last year we talked a little bit about this and the teacher said the king asked for too much and stuff.

Post-Question #8. What did King George think of the colonists?

Following the unit, Jason thought that the king might think the colonists bad, selfish, or greedy. Tim, Kay, and Rita concurred. Tim and Sue offered the thought that the king may have felt that the colonists would have been well advised to pay the taxes and not complain. Mark suggested that the king reacted in anger and sent soldiers to force the colonists to pay what he believed they owed. Brad, Ned, Teri, Sue, and Helen said that the king was probably angry and Brad added that the king probably thought the colonists were stupid for wishing to separate from England.

In general, all of the interviewees were able to assume a degree of empathy for King George following the unit. Apparently they had learned enough about the different points of view surrounding independence for the colonies and the taxation issue that they were able to posit a reaction by King George. This came despite the fact that the point of view taken during the unit decidedly favored colonial separation and resistance to British policy. The students' ability to imagine differing interpretations despite receiving a colonially slanted orientation suggests the relative power of their own knowledge construction capabilities. It also indicates that empathy with opposing ideas is not beyond their reach if the context of historical learning (as in the details and historical narrative) is presented to them in terms that they can understand.

Tim: He just thought, "Hey, we fought your war and so you should pay all the taxes and shouldn't be complaining about it." [Do you think he thought they were bad people?] Yeah, just sort of greedy.

Mark: That they were misbehaving and he sent his soldiers over to tell them to behave because King George didn't think they were. The soldiers were supposed to straighten out the colonists to make them pay their taxes. [What did the colonists do about that?] I can't remember. [Where were the soldiers supposed to stay when they came to the colonies?] King George told them to go and just knock on the people's doors and tell them that they had to feed them and give them shelter. [How did the colonists feel about that?] They didn't like it.

Brad: He probably thought they were dumb to leave him because they wouldn't know what they would get in the colonies. At home they know what they were going to get and they have the supplies. He probably thought they were smart leaving him, but he was probably mad at them.

Teri: Well, he was thinking the same things they were thinking except for . . . I don't know. He didn't like the stuff they were doing. They were going against his rules.

Sue: That they were mean to him but he was really being mean to them. He thought it was just a great idea to tax them. He thought the colonists were crazy because they didn't like what he was doing.

Kay: He probably thought they were people who took land and they wanted to get away from him and that they were a group of selfish people not giving it to him. [Do you think King George had a right to be mad about the colonists?] Yes. [Why?] He didn't have a right to be mad. [So you think the colonists were right and King George was wrong?] Yeah.

Pre-Question #8. Did all the colonists want to break away from England?

In response to this question, two students said they were not sure. Four others indicated with some hesitation that all or most of the colonists wanted to separate from the British. The other four believed that some colonists did not want separation. Helen, who had in earlier interviews maintained somewhat of a theme around this issue, argued that it was black people who wished to break away and become free. Sue and Kay called on information they learned earlier in the year to note that the colonists were after religious freedom. Rita guessed the essence of the kinds of conflict that developed. Most of the answers students provided to this preunit question were offered without much confidence.

Tim: Probably about all of them. Probably they had a big government and they just voted and it really didn't matter what the other people wanted. It would be up to them, and they made the decision. [You mean the ones who won the vote would make the decision?] Yeah. I guess all 13 had their own government and they had a vote and all 13 had to vote to be one country, I guess. [What if you didn't want to break away from England and become a separate country? What would you do then?] I don't know. Maybe they'd go back to England.

Mark: Mostly all of them, but some of them didn't. [What happened to the ones that didn't?] I'm not sure but I think the king made them go to civilize more land and get more land for him.

Brad: I think just some of them. [If you didn't want to, then what?] You just stay there and keep on living your own life. [Was there a problem with the people that wanted to break away?] They probably just let them go.

Sue: They wanted religious freedom and a chance to build a better life and gold and stuff. [Do you think all of the colonists were interested in being free from England?] I don't know.

Helen: Mostly the black people because they didn't want to be slaves. [Were there other people who wanted to break away from England too?] Yeah. [What if you didn't want to break away from England?] You stayed there unless you were forced to go. [But what if you lived in America?] If you wanted to stay there, that didn't stop the other people from going.

Rita: I think some of them weren't tired of him yet. [What happened to these people?] They would try to talk some reason into them and if they couldn't, they'd ship them back or kill them or something.

Pre-Question #9. What happened when there was disagreement among the colonists?

We pair this preunit question here with the preceding one because in the postunit interview this question appears as one item separated into two parts. In response, six students said they did not know or were unsure and the other four started talking about various wars. Tim and Kay mentioned that fighting broke out over land control and eventually a war started (Tim made references to the Revolutionary War and Kay made references to Indians and Texas). Helen invoked knowledge of the French and Indian War and mentioned that the British and French fought, but she could not say anything about the Revolution. In general and not surprisingly, this question appeared to throw all 10 students.

Their responses were offered more as guesses than as well formed understandings of the patriot-loyalist disagreements.

> *Tim:* There was a lot of fighting. [Why did war break out?] Because the people that . . . [What were the Patriots fighting for?] Independence. [What were the English doing?] They wanted it to be their land. That's the reason they went and took people out there, so the people that found the new land kept it for themselves and the English didn't like that so they started a war, I guess.
>
> *Brad:* I think it was when that one president got killed. [Abraham Lincoln?] Yes. [That was the Civil War.]
>
> *Kay:* One of the reasons for the battles was because they wanted the whole land, ocean to ocean, and the Indians had Texas and that area. They wanted that so they fought a war.
>
> *Rita:* We won. [Who's we?] The United States. [What about the war?] I don't know anything about it.
>
> *Post-Question #9a. Did all the colonists want to break away from England or just some of them or what? #9b. What happened when people disagreed?*

After the unit, eight students said some or most of the colonists wished to become independent from England. Eight (but not always the same students as in the previous response) said that disagreements had arisen between the Patriots and the Loyalist Tories. Ned and Kay continued to believe that "all" or almost all of the colonists sought separation from England. Most of the students (80%) were now able to identify the Patriot-Loyalist disputes over independence. However, their answers to the follow-up probe (#9b) revealed continued difficulty describing the outcomes of these disputes.

Five students did not know or were unsure of what happened when disagreements arose among the colonists. Three students said a war began as a result (inferring the onset of the Revolutionary War). Kay mentioned that King George sent soldiers who were assisted by the loyalists, a generally accurate response as far as it went. Jason concluded that "the United States won" as a resolution to the Patriot-Loyalist disagreement, another accurate response as far as it went. Brad seemed to think that all of the Tories returned to England.

Generally speaking, students understood that the Patriots and the Loyalists disagreed about the issue of separation, but could not say much more than this. It is possible that the teacher did not stress the consequences of the "in-house" dispute between the patriots, loyalists, and the generally apathetic colonists with sufficient strength to generate an appreciable understanding in the students. As a result, our interviewees appeared unable to connect the disputation among colonists to any larger issues such as the difficulty patriots had in securing support for their cause and the often extraordinary lengths (e.g., propaganda) to which they went to solicit support and affect public opinion.

> *Jason:* Just some of them. The other ones liked England. [Did they have names?] Patriots wanted to be free and the Tories were people that didn't. [What if the Patriots and Tories got into a disagreement?] The United States won.
>
> *Mark:* I think probably just some of them. I'm not sure about all of them. [If there were some that didn't want to break away, who were those people?] The Loyalists. [Why did they have that name?] Some of them were living in the colonies but still thought King George was doing the right thing and thought the colonists were doing something wrong because they thought King George was a great guy. [What happened when there were disagreements?] I don't know.
>
> *Brad:* A good portion of the colonists, but not all. [Who were the people who didn't want to break away from England?] The people that live there today. [Did they have a special name?] I think it starts with a T. The Tories. [Are you thinking of Patriots and Tories?] Yeah. [Who were the Patriots?] They were the colonists. [What happened when the Tories got into a disagreement with the Patriots?] That was basically the Revolutionary War.
>
> *Ned:* All of them. [Are you guessing?] I'm not sure. [Have you ever heard of Tories?] No.
>
> *Teri:* A lot of them did, but not all of them. [Who was the group that wanted to break away?] I don't know. [What did they call the smaller group that didn't want to break away?] Tories. [Tell me about the Tories.] I don't know. I just know they liked King George and wanted to stay with England. [What happened when they disagreed?] I guess there was a war or something like that.

Sue: Just some of them. [What were the people called who were in favor of breaking away?] Patriots. [There was another group not in favor of breaking away.] Yeah, the Tories. [What was the story with the Tories?] They just liked King George and what he was doing. [What would happen if there were Tories and Patriots living in the same place and they got in an argument about taxes or something?] I don't know.

Kay: Ninety-nine percent of them wanted to break away. [What about that one percent?] They still liked King George. They were called Tories. [What was the group that wanted to break away?] Patriots. [If the people disagreed about what to do, then what happened?] King George would have probably gave some of his soldiers to America and then the Tories could help win the fight.

Rita: Just some. [Explain that.] They didn't mind paying the taxes. They thought King George was good. [Which was the group that wanted to break away?] I think the Patriots. [Who was the other group?] The Tories. [If they disagreed, what did they do about it?] Fought each other. The Tories took the Patriots' supplies away from them wherever they hid them. The Patriots fought back and shot them or something.

Post-Question #10. Eventually the Revolutionary War started. What happened and why? Probes: Where was the war fought? How long did the fighting go on? Who won?

This question was asked only in the postunit interviews because we anticipated that, following the unit, the students would have acquired significant knowledge and understanding of the narrative sequence. This anticipation was largely borne out by the responses.

All 10 students pointed out that the colonists had fought in the war and won, giving us the United States. In general, the interviewees were able to provide substantive information concerning this question and its follow-up probes. Tim, Brad, Helen, Kay, and Rita provided lengthy narrative accounts of the war period. Six students noted the battle of Lexington and five mentioned the battle at Concord. Five students were able to list other battles as well. Six students indicated the role that the Boston Massacre played in the onset of the war. Mark and Kay mentioned the surrender of Cornwallis as the end point of the war. Kay also noted that the Boston Tea Party played a role in the origin of the fighting. Students appeared to have a reasonably strong

understanding of the war period itself, the general nature of the fighting, several cause-effect relationships, and the war's outcome. This seems in part linked to the drama of war and the interest students placed on it in the numerous questions they asked in the W section of the KWL instrument (see Table 2).

> *Tim:* The British sent letters back and forth and the Patriots decided to declare their freedom and King George knew they were a free country. He sent people across on private missions so they wouldn't know they were coming. Paul Revere rode off and told a lot of people that the British were coming but it was sort of too late and they captured Paul Revere in Lexington and the British won the first battle. [One of the battles was obviously fought at Lexington. Do you know where the next one was fought?] The next one was in Concord. I think it was Johnny Dawes. He rode from Lexington to Concord and the British just moved in there and they were surrounded and the Patriots were ready for them. [Did the Patriots win that battle?] Yeah. [Where are Lexington and Concord?] Massachusetts. [Were there battles fought in other places?] Saratoga, Kings Mountain, Yorktown. [How long did the fighting go on?] They didn't have constant battles. [How long before the war was over?] Nine years, I think and they only had eight battles. [Who won?] Colonists.
>
> *Mark:* I can't remember. I'm not sure but I think some of the colonists didn't like it . . . there were kids that were throwing snowballs at the guards and the guards just shot all around in the air and killed a bunch of people. [Where did this happen?] In Boston in the village green. [Did these kids have guns?] No, they were just throwing snowballs at them. [Was there more fighting?] I don't know. I'm not sure. [Where were some of the battles fought?] Lexington, Yorktown, King Mountain, Concord, Brandywine Creek. I can't remember the other ones. [How long did the fighting go on?] Over three or four years. [Who won?] The colonists at Yorktown because General Cornwallis gave up. [Who did he surrender to?] The Patriots. [Who was in charge of the Patriots?] I don't know.
>
> *Brad:* They wanted to be free of King George and the colonists didn't like the Redcoats because they had to give the Redcoats food and shelter and the Redcoats shot into the crowd at children and that made them really mad. It just all built up and then a war started because of that. [Was there something that specifically brought on the fighting?] There was the shot that was heard round the world. [What did they mean by that?] It was the first shot of the Revolutionary War. [What happened?] I'm not sure. [Have you ever heard of the Boston Massacre? Was the Boston Massacre part of what started the shooting in the war?] That was when the Redcoats shot into the crowd when they got hit by a snowball. [Who got killed?] Patriots. [Do you know where the war was fought?] The colonies. [Where were the battles fought?] Mostly fought in the forests, kind of in the middle to behind the colonies--not at the front by the Atlantic. [How long did all this fighting go on?] I'm not sure. About five years. [Who won?] The colonists.

Sue: The Patriots were getting mad at the Redcoats so the Redcoats decided to attack. Paul Revere and this other guy--William Dawes--they waited for the church lights to go on. Two if by water and one meant by land. Two were on so it meant by water so they rode to Lexington but they got caught by English officers, so this doctor went to warn Concord that the Redcoats were coming and they hid and then attacked them. [Who won at Concord?] The Patriots. [How long did the war go on?] Nine years I think. [After it was all done, who won?] The colonies.

Helen: I don't know for sure. [Did you study the battles?] Pretty much. [So how did the fighting start?] People didn't like each other and started to fight.

Rita: The Boston Massacre happened. Some kids were throwing snowballs at the Redcoats, Lobsterbacks, whatever. At first the soldiers didn't mind but then they started shooting and they shot Crispus Attucks??--one of the colonists and then that's what really got the colonists mad. Then they won more of the Tories over to the Patriot side. Then it started getting bigger and bigger. They finally said, "We're fed up with you. Leave us alone. We're not a part of you." [What do you mean things got bigger and bigger.] More and more things happened so the colonists got more and more mad. [Can you explain that?] The Boston Massacre happened and that's what really got them going. Then the Stamp Act happened . . . [What happened with the Stamp Act?] King George put his stamp on everything and that made the price go even higher just for him. Then he let the soldiers stay with the colonists and the colonists didn't like that. The Tories didn't mind. [How did the fighting start?] They got fed up and they said, "King George, you went too far," and they started shooting. That's called "the shot heard around the world."

Pre-Question #10. Who were some of the leaders of the American Revolution?

Five students did not know, were unsure, or had no answer to this preunit question. Three boys mentioned George Washington and Tim also mentioned Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams. Mark, apparently recalling his early colonial history, noted William Bradford and John Smith, and Rita also named Bradford. The students were unable to say much about those they did name.

Post-Question #11. Who were some of the leaders of the American Revolution?

Following the unit, the list grew substantially in response to the emphasis the teacher placed on the key characters involved in securing the birth of the new nation. She also had exercised considerable effort in attempting to balance her description of "patriot heroes" by adding the names and

accomplishments of a number of female participants in the war period. Students were also asked to prepare research reports on these women.

Seven students mentioned George Washington; six noted Paul Revere and Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox; and two students each told of John Adams, Johnny Tremaine, John Hancock, Sybil Ludington, and Molly Pitcher. Only Ned was unable to recall anyone. The other nine students provided details on at least two of the people they mentioned. Much of their ability to recall the Revolutionary era heroes and heroines can be linked to the stories and trade books the teacher provided for the students as they researched and studied the people of the period.

> *Jason:* George Washington, John Adams, Johnny Tremaine, Paul Revere, Dr. Prescott. [Pick one of those people and tell me about him?] John Quincy Adams. I'm related to him. He was in the Sons of Liberty. He became a president. [Anyone else who was important that you know a little bit about?] George Washington. He was the general of the army. He became president, the first one.

> *Mark:* Frances Marion. He started his own army. General George Washington, Paul Revere, and I can't remember. [Tell me a little more about Frances Marion.] He started his own army and he was with the Patriots and he knew his way around the swamps so well that people called him the Swamp Fox. He knew his way around and could get out of them. The Redcoats followed him into the swamps and they got lost and he made it out. He hurt his ankle doing that and had to stay at home. He thought "I'm going to do something about this war," and he started up his own group of farmers. [Why is he so important as a leader?] Because he lost some of the Redcoats plus he fought for the Patriots with a group of farmers. [Why did he come to your mind first?] He's the one I read the most about. [How did that happen?] Mrs. Teacher read a short part about him out of a book and I just started reading about him. [What do you know about George Washington?] He was the main leader of the Patriots and he made most of the decisions. [Why is he thought to be so important? Because he made all the decisions?] Yeah. [Were there other reasons?] He was in the Sons of Liberty and he fought against the Redcoats.

> *Brad:* There was the Swamp Fox. [Who is he?] I forget who it was but they called him the Swamp Fox because he was kind of sly around the swamps. There was Paul Revere. There was a lot of them but I forget their names. There was the person that was up in the church who would say the British were coming. There was Molly Pitcher and there was another woman but I forget what her name was. [Do you know more about this Swamp Fox character?] Around the swamps, he was sly and it seemed

like he vanished. [Was he a Redcoat or a Tory?] He was a Patriot. He led the Patriots. They would follow him and the Swamp Fox helped them. [What about Paul Revere?] He was standing below the church and there was a person on the other side. He was to help warn the Patriots when the Redcoats were coming. [How did he warn them?] He'd go on a horse and shout at them that the Redcoats were coming. He'd find out because up in the church there was a man who's set out candles--like one if they were going to come across the river and two if they were going to come over the land. [Why do you think everybody remembers the Swamp Fox?] Mrs. Teacher told us about that just a couple of weeks ago. [Was it an exciting story?] Yeah, and he was one of the main people that helped win the Revolutionary War.

Teri: I can't think of any. [There were no leaders of the Revolutionary War period that you can think of?] George Washington. [Who besides George?] That's all I can think of. [Tell me about George? Why was he important?] He was the general of the colonists. He was also the first president. I remember the Swamp Fox. [What's the deal with him?] There was a war and most of the Patriots got captured. He had to go home because something happened to his ankle and he couldn't fight anymore. When he thought it was healed, he heard about all the Patriots being captured and so he made up his own secret Patriots. They were farmers and they had to bring their own things and they would attack from the swamp and they drove the British crazy. [Why did that story stick in your mind?] She told it to us just a few days ago.

Sue: General Washington, John Hancock maybe. I don't know. [Tell me a little bit about George Washington.] He was the first president. [Why else is he important? Did he do any other things we should remember him for?] He was general of the Patriots. [What about John Hancock? Why is he important?] Because he was the first one to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Helen: Paul Revere, John Hancock, Johnny Tremaine, John Adams--that's all I can think of. [Pick one and tell me about that person.] Paul Revere was a famous and strong Patriot. He was a silversmith. His most famous engraving was the Boston Massacre. His most famous ride was to tell the people that the Redcoats were coming and another name for the Redcoats was Lobsterbacks because they wore the red coats. [Pick another one.] There was Frances Morton. His nickname was Swamp Fox and he was raised in North Carolina and in North Carolina there's a lot of swamps and stuff, so he was raised at the swamps so he knew there area and all this stuff and he led the Redcoats into the swamp and they got lost and sank in the quick sand. He got out of the woods but the Redcoats never got out because they didn't know how to get out. [How do you know so much about this?] Mrs. Teacher told us. [Did she read you a story about this?] Yes.

Pre-Question #11. Who were some of the women who participated in the Revolutionary War?

Eight students could not respond. Jason recalled Sadie Thompson and Betsy Ross, but his response came following his introduction to Sadie Thompson as the person about whom he was to research and complete his report (Jason had been sick for over three weeks at the beginning of the unit. He was interviewed immediately upon his return to school. However, while he was home recuperating, the teacher had asked him to begin his report on Sadie Thompson). Helen was surprised at the question's implication that women even were allowed to engage in war activities. Rita said that women may have served as nurses.

> *Jason*: Sadie Thompson. [Any others?] Betsy Ross. [What did Sadie Thompson do?] Her brother was a spy. [How did she help in that?] She sent him boxes with letters in them. [How do you know about her?] I had it for my project. [What did Betsy Ross do?] She made the flag.
>
> *Helen*: I didn't know women were allowed to do that.
>
> *Rita:* There should be . . . nurses. [Can you think of any names?] No.

Post-Question #12. Who were some of the women that participated in the Revolutionary War?

As might be expected given the teacher's emphasis on the importance of the roles of various women during the period, all of the students were able to identify at least one influential woman. Seven students provided details and sometimes narrative descriptions about at least two women. Molly Pitcher was mentioned most often (9 times). Sybil Ludington and Deborah Sampson were noted five and four times respectively. Nine additional women were recalled one time each (see Table 4). Generally speaking, the list revealed a fairly impressive array of names, a tribute to the teacher's efforts at balancing the contributions of various people in her war-era account. Occasional confusions and

conflations appeared, however, such as Brad's characterization of the continental soldiers as "slaves" and Helen's inclusion of Louisa May Alcott in her list of female revolutionaries.

Jason: Sybil Ludington. Molly Pitcher. I read about Sybil Ludington. We did a movie on her and a tape. [What about Molly Pitcher? What makes her important?] She brought water to the men and when General Washington said to retreat, she manned the cannon and made the British retreat. [Tell me about Sybil Ludington.] She rode to Dansbury telling all the men that the British were coming.

Mark: Deborah Sampson, Molly Pitcher, Mary Corbett--that's all I can think of. [Tell me about one of them?] Molly Pitcher, her real name was Mary Hayes. They called her Molly Pitcher because she filled the Patriots canteens with water and they started calling her Molly Pitcher, and when her husband died in the war, she took his place firing the cannons for them. [What about one of the other ones?] Deborah Sampson was a girl that wanted to be in the army so she dressed up like a man and enrolled in the army and fought for awhile and they found out her true identity. [Was she kicked out of the army then?] I think she took herself out. I'm not sure.

Brad: [What's important about Sybil Ludington and Molly Pitcher?] Molly Pitcher brought water to the slaves who were fighting. The slaves didn't know her real name and that's why they called her Molly Pitcher. Sybil Ludington helped warn the people like Paul Revere.

Sue: Sybil Ludington. [What's her story?] She was like Paul Revere. She warned the people that Danbury was burning. [Who else?] Mary Pitcher. [What's the story with her?] She took her husband's spot at the cannons and General Washington or somebody told the people to abandon the cannons but she stayed there and shot the cannons. [Any other women you can think of that were important?] No. [Who did you do your project on?] Molly Pitcher.

Helen: There was Nancy Hart, Molly Pitcher, Phyllis Wheatley, Abigail Adams, Mary Carey, Louisa May Alcott. [Pick your favorite one and tell me about her.] Molly Pitcher was my favorite. [Did you do your project on her?] No, I did my project on Nancy Hart but I know more about Molly Pitcher. She took water to the soldiers and she was like a messenger and she gave water to the soldiers. Nancy Hart was an Amazon. [What does that mean?] I don't know. There was a group called the "Nancy Harts." She was born in 1771 and died in . . . no, that ain't right. [What kinds of things did she do?] She was born in Georgia and she was famous because . . . I don't really know why she was famous. [What else? How was she involved in the Revolution?] I can't remember. [Why did Molly Pitcher stick in your mind more?] Because she was more important. There were people who really didn't do anything but were in love with the Revolution, but didn't do a lot. But Molly Pitcher stays in my mind. She helped more and she was one of the reasons we won.

Kay: Deborah Sampson. She disguised herself as a man, Robert Stricklift. Then she . . . [What did she do?] She fought in the war and rode a horse and she got badly wounded and that's how they discovered she was a woman. There was Molly Pitcher and she took . . . [Tell me what you know about her?] She took the place of her husband. He got shot by a cannon. They called her Molly Pitcher because she took pitchers of water to the soldiers. [Who did you do your project on?] I forgot. She was the one that helped put together groups and stuff.

Pre-Question #12. After the Revolutionary War, what had changed?

Three students reported that they did not know or were unsure. Five students deduced that the colonists became free from England and that "we" became the United States. Jason, Sue, and Rita explained that "we" now had a president who was "in charge." Tim and Kay suggested that the country began to expand. Sue made reference to colonial governors, Rita noted the creation of the Congress and the introduction of the voting process, and Mark argued that people simply went on about their everyday lives. Most of these answers were not offered with much confidence. Students appeared again to be deducing answers from the flow of previous preunit questions as well as drawing on their general knowledge of the United States as a country (e.g., operates with a Congress and a President). Their understanding of the momentous change that now faced the new nation was limited at best.

Jason: They weren't ruled by England anymore. [Can you think of other things?] No. [Who ran the colonies before the Revolutionary War?] George Washington. [After they became the United States, who was in charge of them then?] George Washington. [Was he president of the colonies or was he president after the war was over?] After the war was over. [So what was he before the war?] I don't know.

Tim: They became a country. [Who's they?] The people in the New World. It's the United States. [Was there a peace treaty?] Yeah. [What did the colonists do afterwards?] They kept on exploring and they explored Texas and had a couple of little wars with France and they just kept getting bigger. [How do you know about that?] Sort of from the explorers unit, because France was down in Mexico and sort of up in Texas so they had battles in Texas and they took over Texas and just kept moving. They just took over.

Brad: I'm pretty sure the colonies got a free country.

Teri: I don't know.

Sue: I don't know. Maybe some people would stay and try to give the Americans a hard time or something. [So what did we have to do if we were a separate country?] We had to make laws for ourselves. [Why?] Because if we didn't have laws, everyone would be killing each other. [First they were the colonies and then they became the United States. Do you know the difference?] No. [Before the Revolution, who was in charge of the colonies?] John Smith was in charge of Jamestown and William Bradford was in charge of Massachusetts. [What were they called?] They were like a governor. [Who did they have to answer to?] Massachusetts had the Mayflower Compact and everyone had to sign it to get off the ship. John Smith had the House of Burgesses. [Did they have to tell the king when they made decisions?] Yeah. [After the Revolutionary War, did they continue to have governors like this?] I don't know. [We don't have a king now, do we?] We have a president. [Who was the first president?] George Washington. [So how did we get George Washington?] Election. [How did we decide to have elections?] I don't know.

Helen: I really don't know what it was like back then.

Rita: The colonies weren't colonies anymore. The land became the United States and not colonies. They're united. [So they had one leader instead of 13 different leaders?] Probably there was something like the House of Burgesses. [Did they have a singular leader that led the whole United States?] I think so. [Do you know who that might be?] Abe Lincoln. [Who was the first president?] Washington. [Was he in charge of one colony or . . . ?] It says united so he was in charge of the whole United States, then Congress came. [What was Congress?] They helped support the president's rules and they gave him ideas and stuff. [How did they decide to have a Congress?] Voting.

Prior to the unit, these fifth graders seemed somewhat more knowledgeable about colonial government than the fifth graders interviewed by McKeown and Beck (1990) and thus better able to develop educated guesses about how things changed after the war. Even so, their understanding of the nature and functioning of a colony was quite limited. During the previous unit most of them had acquired the concept of a colony as an overseas settlement ruled from afar by a mother country, but most of them were vague about why mother countriers would establish colonies or how the governmental powers were exercised. Also, for some students the term "colony" still suggested a small settlement like Jamestown--a village surrounded by a stockade. These students were disposed at least initially, to construe the Revolution as a dispute between a few small

villages and the English king, rather than as an agreement by 13 large and populous colonies to break away from Britain and unite to form a new nation (Brophy, VanSledright, & Bredin, 1992b).

Post-Question #13. What happened after the Revolutionary War was over?

Tim and Ned could not respond. Four students mentioned a declaration of freedom (at least some of these were thinking about the *Declaration of Independence*, forgetting that it had been issued before the war. Two others noted that the war secured our freedom from Britain. Mark and Rita also spoke of the formation of a government for the new country and described the election of a president. Brad and Sue, appearing to be guessing, suggested that the colonists threw a

party and celebrated.

Jason: Everyone was free.

Brad: I'm not too sure about that. [What do you think?] I think the Redcoats went back home and the colonists kind of threw a huge party that lasted a long time.

Teri: The colonists were free. [How did they get on with it?] I don't know.

Sue: I don't know. Celebrated maybe.

Helen: They declared freedom. [Who?] John Hancock, Johnny Tremaine . . . [For whom?] The U.S.A.

Rita: Then we declared our independence. [Then what?] We've got presidents now and we made the rules and we voted and it was fair.

As the responses indicate, most students were unclear about what happened to the new nation following its victory in the Revolutionary War. The teacher chose not to spend much time explaining the details of the constitutional process, preferring to defer that focus to eighth grade. Students were provided with a general overview of the process. Subsequent postunit responses to

questions about these events indicated the limited depth to which students understood everything involved.

> *Pre-Question #13. How were the 13 United States now different from the 13 colonies? Probes: Who was the person in charge of the colonies before the revolution? (If student says the governor, ask who was in charge of the governor). After the revolution the colonies became the United States. Who was the person in charge of them then?*

Students struggled with this question. We anticipated this and therefore added two follow-up probes asking who led the country before and after the war.

Four students said that the United States had become one country (that the 13 colonies had been small countries before the war). The other six did not know about how things were different. In response to the follow-up probes, seven students mentioned that the United States was now ruled by a president, four said that the colonies had governors before the war, and four noted that the king had ruled the colonies before the war. Most of these responses were accurate as far as they went. However, again they appeared to be generated around some general prior knowledge about U.S. history and some deductions from the questioning process.

> *Tim:* [How were the United States and the colonies different?] The United states was one country and the colonies were 13 little colonies. [So 13 separated colonies.] Yeah. [What does it mean to be one country? What bound them together?] The Declaration of Independence. [Who was the person in charge of the colonies before the Revolution?] In charge of all of the colonies? I thought each colony had its own little government. [So who was in charge of Virginia?] I think they had a government and then they had a specific leader, but they had a governor decide that and the final decision went to the leader. [What about the colony of New York: Did they have a similar kind of thing there?] Yeah. [After the Revolution the colonies became the United States. Who was the person in charge of them then?] George Washington. He was the first president. [Where do you get that from?] I just think it would be George Washington since he was the first president. [Do you know how he got to be the first president?] All 13 colonies voted on it or something. I'm not really sure.

> *Teri:* [How were the United States and the colonies different?] I don't know. [Does the question make sense to you?] No. [Do you know what "united" means?] I forgot. [Together means united. What's a state? Michigan's a state. So we have a bunch of states that are united. Was

that like the 13 colonies? Were they united or separate?] They were united. [Who was the person in charge of the colonies before the Revolution?] Some kings. [Was there someone in charge of a colony? Who was that?] I don't know. [Did they have a title?] I think they were governors. [Do you know what his job was?] Making laws. [After the Revolution the colonies became the United States. Who was the person in charge of them then?] Governors. [Who's the governor of Michigan?] I forgot. [Who was in charge of the United States after they became states?] The president. [Who was that?] George Washington. [How did he become president?] I don't know.

Post-Question #14. After the Revolution, what had changed?

We used the same two follow-up probes to Post-Question #14 that we had used for Pre-Question #13. However, we asked the probes in the postunit interview only when students seemed to have difficulty with the root question or we sought more information than they had provided in response to the initial query.

All 10 students, in responding either to the root question or a probing question, were able to say that a president was in charge after the war. Seven students noted that voting had occurred and six said that the U.S. was now free and was no longer ruled by England. Tim and Rita mentioned that one government was created to rule the new nation and Mark, Sue, and Kay indicated that laws were made to run the country. Ned, Teri, and Sue expressed concern that they lacked an understanding of the details involved in the postwar changes to a new form of government. Helen, seeming to miss the point of the question, returned to her "slaves" theme and also drew on her knowledge of religious freedom and emigration (themes in earlier units) in generating a response.

Tim: They had one government and one president: George Washington. Instead of having a king and 13 leaders, they had one leader. [How did that come about?] I think George Washington was just elected like they are today. [So they voted for him. How did they decide they could vote?] Because they were a free country and they could vote and they didn't have to be ruled by King George. [Have you heard of the *Constitution* or know anything about it?] I think it was right after the war and I think they wrote it so that they could have their first president and a government.

Brad: They became an independent country and they were free of King George. [Did they name a new king?] No, each colony had a little ruler like the House of Burgess and the Continental Congress. [Did the United States finally get a leader?] Yeah, George Washington. [How did they figure that out?] They decided they needed a ruler. [Was Washington a ruler like King George?] Yeah, but he was a little bit better and he was in the same land as the colonists so they had easier access to him. [How did they decide to have him to be their president?] There was a vote. [How did they decide to have voting?] They just eventually thought about how they were treated by King George and they said, "We don't want to be treated like that." They decided they would do things better than King George did and they felt that was a better way.

Helen: There wasn't any slaves anymore and we got our religious freedom back, we got our freedom back, the name changed. More people moved around and they didn't all live in one little colony. They moved around the whole United States.

Kay: The 13 United States were different because they had their freedom and they weren't ruled by King George. [Who were they ruled by?] Nobody until President Washington came. [Was President Washington like King George? Was he like a king?] No. Well, yeah, he was, but President Washington didn't make taxes and he let them be free and they voted. [Who's they? The people?] Yeah. And they voted for what laws they should have and what president they should have. [If George Washington made taxes they didn't like, they could vote for somebody else or make different laws?] Right.

In general, the responses demonstrated some awareness of the fundamentals of governing the new nation. However, the responses provided little in-depth understanding about the dramatic process the leaders of the new country underwent to bring about a workable governing process.

Pre-Question #14. How was the government of the United States formed?

Five students could not respond to the question. Tim, Brad, Helen, Kay, and Rita deduced that voting had occurred but were unable to describe the process by which it began or was carried out. None of the 10 volunteered information about the *Constitution* or the convention that preceded it. Initially, Helen began to weave a story of colonial leadership and government into her account, recalling information she had learned recently in the colonies unit. She then, in reaction to a probe, noted that George Washington had become the first president through the voting process involving "judges."

Tim: They formed it in part of Maryland--Washington, D.C. [How did they decide what kind of government to have?] I don't know any other way except voting for it. [Who did the voting?] The leaders of each colony. [Do you think the *Constitution* has anything to do with this?] Yeah, maybe.

Brad: Elections or votes. [How did they decide who to vote for and how to have the elections and all that kind of stuff?] They had a town gathering where they would go up and tell what they'd do for their town.

Helen: They voted. [How did they decide to vote?] I don't know where they got the idea. [How do you know they voted?] We're studying it. They said, "This is our captain." And if they didn't like it, they could go back to England or wherever they came from because that's what they voted for and that was the way it was going to be. [Did the United States have a captain?] Yeah. [Who was the first captain of the United States?] George Washington. He was president. [How did they decide to have a president?] They voted. [Why did they vote?] Because there were a lot of people wanting to be president. They only way they could do that was by voting. [Who did the voting?] The judges. Not judges but other people that didn't want to be president.

Kay: The one that took part in most of the war maybe. The one that told them you could be free, but I'm not sure. [How did they decide to have a government?] Well, they had to have a leader. [How did they decide to get that leader?] They voted. [How did they decide to vote?] I don't know.

Post-Question #15. How was the new government formed in the United States?

Five students still were unsure or said that they did not know. Jason, Sue, and Kay attributed the new government's origin to a voting process but were unable to provide much detail in describing it. Sue echoed her response concerning lawmaking but without much elaboration. Tim mentioned the *Constitution* but was unsure about what it did precisely or the nature of its contents. Brad noted again how the U.S. government was led by a president. Students appeared to have the general idea about the election of a new leader (a president) through the voting process. Several knew that the *Constitution* had something to do with the election of a president and the creation of laws. However, beyond this much the students left the unit with little understanding of the difficult task of constructing, presenting, and ratifying the

Constitution and its *Bill of Rights* emendation. This is consistent, we note again, with their teacher's curriculum decisions about dealing with this topic.

> *Jason:* They voted. [Who made the decisions to vote on things?] The colonists. [Have you ever heard of the *Constitution*? Explain what you mean?] They have all the rules in the *Constitution* for government. [Who made these rules?] I don't know.
>
> *Mark:* I can't remember anything about that. [Does the *Constitution* ring a bell?] Yeah. [Do you know anything about it?] Not really. [How about the Continental Congress?] They were the ones who wrote letters to King George telling him that they didn't like him taxing the tea and they told him to stop and King George just kept right on taxing. They're the ones who thought of the slogan "No taxation without representation." [After the war was over, did the Continental Congress have any role in the voting and electing business?] I think that's in the Congress of the United States. They were just called the Congress. [Who were some of the people in the Continental Congress?] I don't know. I think Ben Franklin might have been.
>
> *Ned:* I don't know. [Have you ever heard of the Continental Congress?] Yeah. [What do you know about it?] I can't remember. [Have you ever heard of the *Constitution*?] Yeah. [What do you know about that? Did you study the *Constitution* at all?] I don't think so.
>
> *Teri:* I don't know. [Have you ever heard of the *Constitution*?] Nope. [You didn't study that at all?] Maybe we did and I just wasn't there.
>
> *Sue:* They might have . . . King George might have had some good laws so they might have taken the good laws and thrown out the bad laws and just made laws of their own. [Who do you think was doing this? Making these new laws? You said something about voting. Was everybody voting to make new laws?] I don't know. [Have you ever heard of the *Constitution*?] Yeah. [Did you study about it or do you know what it is?] Yeah, there's laws on it. [Have you ever heard of the *Articles of Confederation*?] No.
>
> *Kay:* I can't tell you anymore. [How did they decide to do all that?] Well, they voted. [How did they vote? Did they just decide one day that they were going to vote and how did they decide?] They thought if it's free, then everybody should have a part. [Who decided that? All the people?] Yeah. [Or some of the people?] Yeah. A group like Sons of Liberty. [Have you ever heard of the *Constitution*?] Yeah. [Do you know what that is?] No. [Do you know what the Continental Congress was?] No.

Post-Question #16. What were some of the surprising things you learned about in studying the American Revolution period?

Given that students appeared to know little about this momentous period in U.S. history before the unit, we were interested to find out how what they

had learned--much of it for the first time--struck them. The responses to this question turned out to be a bit disturbing: six students (all five boys and one girl) initially said that nothing they had learned was particularly surprising to them. By probing and shifting the question to include such descriptors as "interesting" or "memorable," students did mention several items that caught their attention. For the boys, these included the fight for freedom, details about George Washington, the Swamp Fox, and different fighting methods. For the girls, the list included King George's rule, the Boston Tea Party and Boston Massacre, general details about life in the era, and women involved in the war.

Jason: No. [What did you remember the most?] That we won. [What about some of the stories of the people themselves?] No. [The most important thing is that we won? Why does that stand out in your mind?] Because if we didn't, we wouldn't be free right now.

Tim: I didn't know George Washington really was a fighter. I didn't know he was a general. I thought he was just a leader and an older guy. [Is there one thing that really stands out for you?] Not really. I didn't know about King George or hardly any of this, but nothing really surprised me.

Mark: No, not really. Well, about the Swamp Fox. [Why was that surprising to you?] Because for spring vacation, I usually go to Myrtle Beach. It's in South Carolina and that's where the Swamp Fox was and they have a college there that's named after him. [What's the college called?] Frances Marion college, because that's where his house was and they still have his old house standing.

Brad: Not really. It was different the way they fought. Now we can be hundreds of miles away and bomb the enemy, but back then they'd charge each other. [Anything else that surprised you?] The way they fought. I thought the colonists would go to King George. That's basically it.

Ned: No.

Teri: Not that I can remember, just the Swamp Fox story.

Sue: I didn't know that King George ruled them. I didn't know what the Boston Tea Party was and the Boston Massacre. [Were those things surprising to you?] Yeah. [Is there one thing that stands out in your mind as being something that really kind of caught your attention because it was very different than what you expected?] No.

Helen: A lot. The Revolutionary War was nine years. King George made the colonists pay. They were a lot like the Boston Massacre where kids died, the Boston Tea Party, surprising facts about Paul Revere. [What was the <u>most</u> surprising things you learned?] (Unintelligible) was one of the kids that died and he didn't really do anything. [Where did he die?] Well, kids were throwing snowballs at soldiers. [Where?] The Boston Massacre. The soldiers got real mad and went to this building where Crispus Attucks was and they shot these kids. [Anything else?] No, not really.

Kay: Yeah. I was surprised about the Boston Massacre and . . . [Why was that surprising?] Well, kids got killed just for throwing snowballs at the soldiers. The Revolutionary War, that was surprising. [How so?] Because there was women in it and I didn't know that. I didn't know Paul Revere got captured on his ride.

Rita: The colonists won. They had so little guns and stuff. [Why do you think that was?] Frances Marion. General Washington too . . . I enjoyed the story of Deborah Sampson. [Why did the story about Deborah Sampson stick with you?] It didn't come to her right then that she had to walk like a boy, talk like a boy, look like a boy. [Why did she have to be like a boy?] In order to get in the army. All the other girls didn't get to go in. When she got shot, she had to take the bullet out all by herself. [Where was she shot?] In the leg. [The doctor said, "Your leg says you're lying," because she was walking like she was hurt.

The gender differences in the responses to this question are consistent with some found in the KWLs and in previous interviews. The boys tended to be a bit more interested in the details of the war itself, the fighting techniques, and the war "heroes." The girls tended to be more interested in the social aspects of the historical period and the dramatic and interactional features of the Boston Tea Party and Massacre.

Discussion

These fifth-graders' knowledge and understanding of the events and details leading up to the Revolutionary War and of the war itself grew considerably as a result of their learning experiences during the unit. They entered the unit with background information derived from the explorers, Native Americans, and colonies units but with very little specific information about the Revolutionary War or the birth of the United States as a nation. Their

responses to the postunit questions show that they had acquired considerable factual knowledge and some depth of understanding of the events, details, and causal relationships that brought about the Revolution.

Like the fifth graders interviewed by McKeown and Beck (1990), these fifth graders (except for Jason) possessed very little specific prior knowledge about the American Revolution as they began their study of the topic. This is to be expected for students taught within the traditional expanding communities curricular sequence which introduces chronological study of history at fifth grade. Prior to fifth grade, students are unlikely to be exposed to instruction about the Revolution unless a teacher touches on it in the process of teaching about Independence Day, George Washington (either in connection with Presidents' Day or as a Famous American studied as such), or state history (likely in the east coast states). Some students are exposed to such instruction, however, and some pick up information about the Revolution through out-of-school experiences or through reading children's fiction.

The teacher made use of children's fiction during the unit, reflecting common and widely recommended practice. Barton (1992) also noted an emphasis on children's historical fiction in a case study of a similar fifth-grade unit on the American Revolution. He also noted heavy reliance, by both the teacher and the students, on narrative structures in representing knowledge about this historical period in speech and writing. Specifically, Barton noted that the teacher and students used five overlapping structures to place their study of the Revolution into a narrative framework: The unit as a whole was treated as a sequence of causally related events which together formed the "story" of the American Revolution; each event was itself treated as a story with characters, problem, and resolution; these stories emphasized the feelings and actions of individuals; fictive conversations were spontaneously created in order to

convey information; and nations were endowed with human characteristics. Similar tendencies were seen in our data, both in the teacher's narration of stories about the period and in students' responses to our questions (which emphasized the words and actions of individuals and often personified acts of Parliament or diplomatic exchanges between nations as conversations between the king and colonial leaders).

As we have noted in several previous reports in this series, the narrative mode seems particularly well suited both to history as subject matter and to children as learners, and its power can be seen in the tendency of the students to remember the story lines of the children's fiction to which they have been exposed, often reporting them with considerable elaborative detail. However, the narrative mode and children's fiction in particular need to be used judiciously. As Levstik (1989) and others have noted, reliance on these resources can lead to distorted understandings if students are not clear about the distinctions between historical accounts and fictional recreations or if they are exposed to fictional selections depicting events that are not historically accurate. Some such confusion was seen here in students' inclusion of Johnny Tremaine as a Revolutionary leader and signer of the *Declaration of Independence* and Louisa May Alcott as a female participant in the Revolution.

The students' understanding was tilted toward appreciation of American heroes and heroines and toward justification of the war as a defense of colonial rights and liberty. This is consistent with the teacher's bias, which assigned the moral high ground to the colonists. In turn, this is consistent with an educational approach that seeks to make children proud of their cultural and historical heritage and to help them develop some reverence for the efforts that the founders of the nation expended in ensuring freedom and liberty for their descendants. In part, this approach sacrifices the teaching of

history as an interpretive discipline. These students moved away from their study of the Revolutionary period with a singular view of the events of the era.

If history is to be taught as an interpretive discipline, and we believe that it should be to a degree, then these students will need to encounter other points of view on these events as they grow older (in eighth and tenth grades if the typical U.S. history sequence is followed). They will need to learn about the British perspective on the war and might also benefit from a more in-depth study of the Patriot-Loyalist dispute, perhaps taking a class session or so to role play the various points of view replete with arguments and rationales. Such activities and the pedagogical outcomes they suggest probably lie within the ability range of most of the fifth graders we interviewed. However, we cannot yet say whether the time spent would be worth the effort and bring about the desired appreciations in students.

Students acquired only the most rudimentary understanding of the process by which the government of the United States became what it is. In later grades, they will need more lengthy and extended treatment of the constitutional convention process, the battles over how the *Constitution* should govern, and the *Bill of Rights* and the ratification process in latter grades. Perhaps more time could be taken from studying the war itself (battles, strategies, techniques) and diverted to helping students understand the drama that unfolded as leaders attempted to bring order to the new nation.

Students already have heightened interests in the dramatic (as in the Boston Massacre and Boston Tea Party for example). These interests could be turned to the study of the foundation of the new government, although such study would have to be pitched in such a way that fifth graders could make reasonable sense of the process. This should not be too difficult; these fifth

graders (save maybe Helen) already possess some understanding of the process. They would need to be taken further; otherwise their limited knowledge of leadership, Congress, and voting might become a source of later misunderstandings or naive conceptions about one of the more important and fundamental features that makes the United States unique among nations of the world.

Conclusion

Comparison of preunit and postunit data suggest that students gained appreciably in their knowledge and understanding of this important period in U.S. history. Although students entered the unit with limited prior knowledge, they did possess a few naive ideas about the period. With the possible exception of Helen (and perhaps Ned), these naive conceptions were enriched or replaced with more substantive knowledge. This suggests that fifth graders, although still requiring some help with sophisticated historical ideas, are ready, eager, and quite able to learn history in some detail. They also appear motivated to benefit from the dramatic features of historical narrative as long as the dramatic serves to impart the substance of history rather than drama for its own sake. We conclude by recommending a stronger emphasis on alternative perceptions of the dispute between England and the colonies. We also recommend that fifth graders be exposed to a more in-depth treatment of the process involved in creating the government that survives to this day.

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